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Environmental Storytelling: Negotiating Travelling Norms in Post- Socialist Journalism

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MA Journalism and Mass Communication
MSc Environmental Sciences and Policy

Thesis presented for the degree of
Doctorate in Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which professional journalists in Bulgaria balance their normative commitments to society and democracy, and the increasing dominance of economic and market priorities over their work, when covering issues of collective interest – such as environmental change. It studies the advance of a liberal Anglo-American model that is influenced significantly by economic and market priorities into the post-socialist region of Central and Eastern Europe. After more than two decades of domesticating neoliberalism, post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe offers a suitable setting in which to study the effects of market and business influence over journalism. By means of participant observation in the newsrooms of opinion setting weekly *Capital* and Bulgaria's leading commercial television channel BTV, this thesis establishes how journalistic norms shift in favour of business and commercial interests and weaken journalists' commitment to collective public interests and democracy, as defined by 'Fourth Estate' theory.

A theoretical framework is applied which examines journalists' engagement with democracy, pluralism, public interest, diversity and equal participation of citizens in political decision making, conceptualised as 'voice' and 'dialogue', and compares those with their engagements with market and business imperatives. Tensions arising out of the implementation of practical journalistic norms such as neutrality, bias, objectivity, novelty, authority order and 'the wall' between advertising and editorial are explored in detail. The research

finds that professional journalism in Bulgaria is evolving to accommodate media owner interference, market and business oriented occupational and editorial practices, and loss of pluralism and diversity in media production formats. Steady processes of detachment from commitments to storytelling about collective public interests are explained in terms of the neoliberal logics dominating the Bulgarian media. Potential corrections are also identified that arise from the interaction of mainstream media and citizen journalism and social media.

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CHAPTER ONE: Purpose and Structure of Thesis

1.1. Introducing the project and the purpose of this chapter.

Sofia's Eagles' Bridge, one of the busiest crossroads in Bulgaria's capital, was peculiarly crowded on the warm evening of June 15, 2012. Instead of the endless lines of car traffic, the triple carriageway roads were packed with protesters: mostly in their 20s and 30s, but also families with children and elderly couples. They walked around carrying handmade posters and chanting slogans like "We want forests, we don't want concrete" and "Vitosha! Vitosha!" Hundreds of police surrounded them, but there was no sign of tension or violence. Journalists and camera crews were mixing with the crowd, doing interviews and reporting on what was the greatest outburst of environmental civic protest in the city over the past decades. Suddenly there was tension around one of the TV crews. The chanted slogans changed from "Down Tseko from Aleko" to "Down with BTV!" A group of people sitting on the ground seemed to be turning their backs to the camera, refusing to be interviewed or photographed. The reporter persisted. Confrontation escalated, a young man stood up, and the cameraman was pushed to the ground. Later both the journalist and the protester sought medical help.

The unpleasant incident with the reporting crew of BTV, Bulgaria's largest commercial television broadcaster, happened on the third day of civic protest against controversial amendments to the Forestry Act. Recently passed by Parliament, the new legal texts were meant to relax the regulations for constructing ski runs and other sports facilities in Bulgaria's forests. But environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs) saw the new law as yet another lobbyist triumph of skiing investment mogul Tseko Minev and his business partners whose latest project involved the construction and extension of ski runs and lifts in Vitosha, the mountain overlooking the city of Sofia. The Forest Act amendments would remove the last administrative obstacles and enable the project's implementation, environmentalists claimed. For months they had been trying to prevent it by sending statements, arguing at Parliamentary Commission hearings, and staging protest rallies. But they felt that their voice was underreported and suppressed by mainstream media, and particularly by BTV, who had on many previous occasions either refused to cover protest activities against the Forest Acts' amendment, or presented them as marginal and extremist. This is how in mid-June, when 4,000 protesters occupied Orlov Most – the Bulgarian name of Eagles' Bridge, BTV's crews were no longer welcome by many of them.

The events at Orlov Most in this hot week of June 2012 were analysed in detail by journalists and political analysts in Bulgaria. But the attack on BTV's news crew was of particular importance to me as someone who has devoted the best part of two decades to both journalism and environmental civil society activism in Bulgaria and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). My interest has gradually exceeded the boundaries of practical and project work and has led me to a scholarly attempt to understand the developments in

society and mass media over the past decades that make enemies out of news reporters and protesting environmental activists. In this chapter I shall outline the pre-history of this attempt, define the research question and present the structure of the thesis.

1.2. Author's motivation and professional background.

Probably at some point every journalist covering environmental stories has heard from an editor something along the lines of: "Enough ecology - get me some real news!" In my case it was my editor's response to a story about the imminent destruction of precious wetland ecosystems around the city of Sofia, back in the summer of 1995. A year earlier I had started my news reporting career at Bulgaria's first privately owned television station Nova, which had just started operating on a regional broadcast license over the city of Sofia. Just about the same time my university wind-surfing instructor had involved me and a group of other students in the launch of a nature-protection club. With the 'velvet revolution' spirit still in the air, we were excited to participate in the processes that shook societies of the former Eastern bloc of which Bulgaria was part.

A second-year university student of journalism myself, I felt equally excited about both protecting nature and making television news. Moreover, I thought somewhat naively that the two could work together well, with my green activism feeding story ideas into my reporting, and my reporting securing precious television publicity for environmental activism. This is why the rejection of my wetlands story left me embittered and confused. The story met all the news criteria that I was aware of: it was newsy, visual, original,

balanced to the best, and certainly of interest to the channel's viewers, some of whom were using the wetlands in question for recreation and fishing. What could the professional reasons for refusing a story like this be, I kept wondering? Or was it a result of my editor's political loyalties to the current government?

These questions were to stay in my mind over the following years, when I left Nova to pursue a degree in Environmental Sciences and Policy at the Central European University in Budapest, studying the media coverage patterns of nuclear power – one of the most controversial environmental, political and economic issues in Bulgaria's recent history. Later, working with environmental journalists as an international magazine editor and trainer at the Budapest-based Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe, I began realizing that they had gone through similar experiences at one time or another, that the arguments and questions around environmental reporting practices follow similar patterns from West to East, and that the reasons for them lie beyond the set of professional norms that guide journalism.

1.3 Setting the scene and introducing the research question.

My desire to better understand the meeting points between journalistic norms and environmental activism in journalistic practice motivated me to undertake this research project within the Geography Department at the Open University in Milton Keynes, UK. The original purpose of this thesis was to better understand the factors that shape professional journalists' engagement with environmental issues of local and global

importance. For this I decided to investigate how journalists define and conceptualise their own professional duties, roles, obligations, and justify their actions – or inactions, and how all these conceptions work in actual life: what are the requirements, procedures, processes and formats that shape editorial practices. I decided to look deeper into the norms of journalism, their origins and developments, and the way in which they encompass contradictions between competing discourses around liberal democracy, environmental change and global capitalism. And of course I have maintained my original interest in the geographic aspects of the problem: if there are established norms and models of journalism, how do they travel, what social and political values do they reflect, and how does their arrival affect the post-socialist journalistic field? I therefore formulated the following research question:

How do professional journalists balance their normative commitments to society and democracy, and the increasing dominance of economic and market priorities over their work, when covering issues of collective interest – such as environmental change?

Answering this question requires close examination of developments in the relationship between journalism and democracy. Social movements, activist campaigns and other forms of organised civic activity often emerge around issues of collective social interest like environment protection. Concerned about their health, wellbeing, and quality of life, people undertake civic actions around issues of collective importance and demand

participation in political and economic decision making to achieve change. The research question suggests that environmental change offers a suitable context for studying changing professional norms of journalism. The research question also places the impact of economic market priorities on journalistic work at the centre of my research project.

1.4 Structure of this thesis.

My first step was to examine the fields of scholarly debate that are of relevance to the research question and then to propose a theoretical framework for the collection and interpretation of research data. That work is described in Chapter 2. It explores the scholarly background available around the practice, culture and ideology of journalism and examines the conceptualisation of contemporary media systems and models of journalism, arriving at Hallin and Mancini's (2004) definition of a dominant Anglo-American 'liberal' model of journalism. After briefly examining the connections between ideologies and cultures of journalism (Hanitzsch 2007) the chapter concludes that a discourse of professionalism promotes the interests of media owners, as well as more general market and business values. This is a key point for the current research. Contradictions crystalize between journalists' traditional responsibilities to democracy and the public good, as defined under Fourth Estate theory (McQuail 2005), and their role as loyal and productive employees. Professional norms around these often conflicting priorities frequently clash and create tensions within the purely practical norms that regulate the practice of journalism (Bennett 1996). The various routines, formats, beats and standards that shape journalistic practices seem to secure a relatively higher prominence to official sources and

viewpoints than to alternative or critical ones, thus placing under question the watchdog function of journalism (Gans 1979, Fishman 1980, Clayman, Heritage et al. 2007, Eriksson and Östman 2013). Recent normative and occupational changes influence the professional practices of journalism, giving priority to market and business considerations over journalistic responsibilities to safeguard democracy and the public interest (Aldridge and Evetts 2003, Örnebring 2009b). These changes, and evidence that professional practices of journalism cannot be properly understood without an account of the broader range of social, political and economic factors that influence them, suggest a careful look in the political economy of journalism for traces of advancing neoliberal discourse.

The post-socialist region of CEE offers suitable conditions for the observation and analysis of the advance of market and business-related priorities in various fields of professional practice, including journalism, that could be associated to a neoliberal discourse. These influences are conceptualised as loss of ‘voice’ – defined as freedom, creativity, alternative models of social organisation and the ability to defend collective interests (Couldry 2010) - and ‘dialogue’ – as a connecting term for the non-linear democratic engagement of citizens with political, economic and administrative decision-makers (Phillips 2011). Journalist’s role in these processes is critically assessed with the help of Bourdieu’s (1998a) description of neoliberalisation symptoms in the journalistic field. Environmental change is identified as an example of an alternative discourse which promotes collective interest and challenges the market and business imperative (Toke 2000).

The set of research methods used for the purpose of this research is presented in Chapter 3: Research Method, Data and Field Description. The chapter provides a detailed account of

the methodology used for implementing the empirical research component of the project, in the light of the research question and the theoretical framework. It justifies participant the use of participant observation and semi-structured interviews as data collection methods. It defines the social profile of research participants as well as the venues for data collection. The chapter provides details about the fieldwork structure and placements and the types and volume of data that have been collected. Finally, Chapter 3 justifies the choice of Bulgaria as a suitable research ground.

Chapter 4: Fieldwork and Data Collection aims to describe in detail the process of fieldwork and data. It demonstrates how the chosen research method has been implemented in Bulgaria, reports on fieldwork preparations, discusses the ethical considerations surrounding my research and the ways in which they have been addressed. Further, the chapter reveals the broader picture of the Bulgarian mass media's post-socialist landscape, introducing those features that shape contemporary Bulgarian journalism. The specifics of each newsroom placement and the actual work done there are described in detail, followed by a similar description of other research arenas: the journalists' reporting and personal fields. My past and present involvement with the environmental movement in Bulgaria and with BezDim – the civil initiative against tobacco smoking - is reflexively described.

The analytical framework of this project is applied on the collected research data in chapters 5 to 8. An overview of the contemporary journalistic practices observed and documented during the fieldwork period in Bulgaria is offered in Chapter 5, entitled Reporting Findings: Business Influence over Professional Journalistic Practice in Bulgaria.

The picture of post-socialist professional journalism, as described by the participants in this research, is scanned for signs of advancing market values and business interests of mass media owners. Participants' attitudes to journalism are analysed in seven categories distilled from the available data: likes; dislikes; freedom; limitations; power; 'honesty'; and no idea or attitude with regard to journalism. The chapter discusses the professional aspects that journalists like and dislike, which make them proud or passionate, and which disappoint and discourage them. It then analyses the specifics of categories of attitudes that have emerged from this research like: freedom and limitations, power, and 'honest journalism'. The chapter reports on the links that participants make between their profession and social change, democracy, and the social responsibilities of journalism, which are further discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. Tensions between the normative orders of journalism emerge when journalists engage with issues of collective and social importance. These tensions are observed around norms like objectivity, neutrality or balance, publishing formats or the so called 'wall' between editorial and advertising are interpreted and applied reveals new dimensions of the relationships between editorial and media owners' interests. Chapter 5 investigates how occupational and employment practices, as well as editorial processes, including beats, formats, and reporting techniques, are subject to private economic influences and pressure from media owners. In an attempt to understand participants' understandings of journalism the chapter also reports on their engagement with various sources and types of journalistic education: academic and professional.

Research participants' accounts have demonstrated that a distinct relationship between professionalism and the ability to change the life of others exists. Based upon this

observation Chapters 6 and 7 probe journalists' engagement with issues of collective interest, such as environmental issues and tobacco smoking. Chapter 6: Environmental Change explores, drawing on two stories from Bulgaria's journalistic field, two cases that illustrate how contemporary journalistic practice in Bulgaria is subject to market and economic influences. The first one is about Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach, a documentary by Genka Shikerova (2009) investigating the uncontrolled urbanisation and over-construction of Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. The case demonstrates how questioning - perhaps unintentionally - the dominant discourse that prioritizes economic development and business profit over collective interest has put at stake the professional integrity of BTV's journalists, stirring a major controversy between the station's editorial and management team and representatives of the tourism and construction industries. The second case concerns the UN climate change summit held in Copenhagen in December 2009 and the way in which Bulgarian journalists interpreted the political, economic and social dilemmas that were debated at the forum.

Chapter 7 offers a further empirical case study designed to examine journalistic practice and the ways in which professional norms and routines enable official and nonofficial communication in the processes of policy formation over the environmental health issue of tobacco smoking in closed public places. Public participation in government decision making, pluralism and democratic values in society are conceptualised as 'voice' and 'dialogue'¹ in the chapter. It explores how in the almost complete absence of effective public participation mechanisms, journalists' interpretations of professional norms, rules

¹ An earlier version of this chapter was published as Antonov, P. P. (2012). Citizen Action and Post-Socialist Journalism: The Responses of Journalists to a Citizen Campaign against Government Policy towards Smoking. Citizen Voices: Performing Public Participation in Science and Environment Communication. L. Phillips, A. Carvalho and J. Doyle. Bristol / Chicago, intellect: 73-95.

and routines enabled citizens' arguments in favour of a comprehensive smoking ban. Exploring the justifications and conditions for journalists' judgements that underpin the extent and ways in which the media represent citizen voices is part of the analytical contribution of this research project. . Based on the perspective of a journalism practitioner equipped with a set of social research methods, Chapter 7 offers an account of journalists' engagement with the views and stands of a grassroots civic initiative in comparison with their engagement with the stands of politicians in power and government officials. Through the empirical study, the chapter contributes to the thesis' exploration of journalists' roles and practices of articulation, marginalisation or silencing of citizen voices over environmental and health issue of collective interest.

The concluding chapter draws together the interim conclusions from the empirical work, and offers a final response to the research question that framed the research as a whole. It re-examines critically the cohesion between the literatures covered, methods followed, and research findings obtained in the course of this project. Chapter 8 offers critical self-reflection on the part of the author of his approach to answering the research question and its strengths and weaknesses. It also points to some questions for further research. Finally, Chapter 8 indicates some of the ways in which journalism might revive and nurture its role in 'giving voice' to collective public interests, such as environmental issues, whether at the level of localized public health concerns or on the global scale.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature and Issues

2.1. Introduction and purpose of this chapter.

An unexpected email written in Russian appeared in my mailbox in the last days of summer, back in 2008, just weeks before I began this research project. It was sent by Cyril², a young journalist working for a regional radio station in the city of Omsk, within the Asian part of Russia. Cyril had been a participant in a training workshop for Russian journalists that I had led in the Altai Mountains during July 2008. The formal purpose of the training, as recorded in the papers of the donor and the hosting organisation, the Russian Regional Environmental Center, had been to improve journalists' understanding of adverse climate change and to raise their professional skills for covering environmental issues. As usual though, I had allocated a good deal of time in the 4-day long programme of the training for discussing the difficulties that journalists face in their everyday work, and sharing tips and strategies for overcoming them. I remembered Cyril as one of the brightest and most active participants, full of enthusiasm and good humour, always willing to share his numerous, often frustrating attempts to cover stories of corruption and abuse of public interest by different officials. He had become increasingly interested in the norms of journalistic practice, applied by leading quality news media as *The Guardian* and the BBC, and I remembered feeling happy and proud to some extent, with the sense of 'firing up' the passion for quality journalism in him and his fellow reporters, who, I hoped, were to go

² Name has been changed for confidentiality purposes.

back to their newsrooms and make journalism and democracy in Russia's remote regions at least one little bit better. But Cyril's message brought my hopes to an abrupt end. Roughly translated to the best of my Russian language knowledge it read: "Thank you for the very interesting and inspiring training. As a result of it I have decided to quit from my job at the radio and try something else. I simply realized from what you told us that I will never be able to do proper journalism in my life here in Russia..."

This honest and bold feedback made me think carefully about the purpose and usefulness of professional training which transfers and delivers practical skills and work techniques of journalism from one part of the world, with its traditions, values, cultures and methods of journalism, to another. How much in common was there among journalists in the UK and in Russia, the USA and China, Italy and Cameroon, among their professional skills, needs, editorial requirements, realities? And was there any use in transplanting aspirations, expectations and images of a profession that seemed strikingly different in various mass media outlets within the UK or Hungary alone, let alone among various world regions? This chapter will seek to answer at least part of these questions by reviewing the fields of scholarly debate that are of relevance to my current research project, and will suggest a theoretical framework for the collection and interpretation of research data that would make it possible to answer its primary research question:

How do professional journalists balance their normative commitments to society and democracy, and the increasing dominance of economic and market priorities over their work, when covering issues of collective interest such as environmental change?

Establishing the evidence of existing differences among the types of journalism in different countries and world regions is the starting point of this chapter's journey through the vast

field of scholarly literature about journalism. For this purpose it will engage with the dominant model of contemporary journalism, described by Hallin and Mancini's (2004) analysis of media systems as the Anglo-American 'liberal' model. Following the connection between 'media systems', 'journalism models', and the 'practice' of journalism invites a debate around ideologies and cultures of journalism. Journalistic professionalism is defined as a discourse effectively employed to promote the interests of media owners, as well as market and business values. Taking off from Bennett's (1996) conceptualisation of normative orders in journalism, the chapter uses core news production sources as starting point for exploring evidence of normative and occupational changes of contemporary journalism that give priority to market and business influences over journalists' responsibilities to safeguard democracy and the public's interest according to the 'Fourth Estate' theory. These influences reflect a dominant neoliberal discourse, which extends market logic over all other fields of social life and prioritizes business and economic priorities. Engaging with a popular 'transition' discourse of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) the chapter argues that the post-socialist region can be used as research ground to observe and analyse the advance of neoliberal market and business influences over various fields of life, including journalism. This is conceptualized with the help of Couldry's (2010) concept of 'voice' as a connecting term that contradicts neoliberal scenarios for social developments and enables alternative ones.

To draw out neoliberal market and business influences over post-socialist journalism it is necessary to identify a border area where these influences are contradicted and challenged by another discourse which promotes collective interest and challenges the market and business imperative. Climate change is one such discourse (Toke 2000) whose communication, media and journalistic aspects have been thoroughly studied. One of them is journalists' support for the public's ability to engage in dialogue with government and business stakeholders and participate in decisions that affect issues of collective social

importance like environmental and climate change. The major points of debate and conclusions concerning the ways these literatures help to orient the empirical research are listed at the end of the chapter.

2.2. Conceptualising the practice, culture and ideology of journalism.

Scholarly debates around journalism and mass media are dispersed among different disciplines, theoretical levels and conceptualisations that are often not clearly related to one another. The low level of consensus and interdisciplinary dialogue in journalism studies can be explained by the unresolved critical debate between ‘industry’ and ‘university’ viewpoints³; and a perceived clash between the perspectives of humanities and social sciences (Deuze 2005). Denis McQuail (2005 p. 81) describes conceptual divisions on a deeper level – in the theoretical approaches to mass communication, and points at the ‘striking’ ambiguity of the role assigned to mass media by different research perspectives and theories. In addition, a number of scholars have raised concerns about what they see as the self-adsorption and parochialism of Western media theory which tends to draw universal conclusions based on evidence almost exclusively gathered in affluent Western societies (Downing 1996, Sparks 1998, Curran and Park 2000). Aware of these risks, I have scanned existing theories, concepts and models for available evidence of a dominant type of journalism and its features and impacts over the profession’s practice.

An influential view of mass media systems by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm in *Four Theories of the Press* (1956) suggests the existence of four theoretical media models⁴

³ Deuze (2005) himself chooses to conceptualize journalism as a professional ideology, but acknowledges the abundance of different approaches.

⁴ According to *The Four Theories of the Press*, The Soviet – Communist media model exists in the countries with communist regimes and stems from the historically more familiar Authoritarian model which includes a variety of media systems across the developing world, as well as the fascist and authoritarian history of the

arranged along three geo-political world regions: the Soviet totalitarian sphere; the liberal democratic West with its offshoots; and the rest of the world. This geo-political theoretical perspective was rooted in its contemporary Cold War vision of the world. Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956 p. 1) therefore suggest that understanding of mass media is only possible based on knowledge of the 'social systems' in which they operate. This, they argue, requires a look at the basic beliefs and assumptions held by a society.

Apart from the apparently limited knowledge of its authors about the world beyond Western and colonial media realities, a common ground for contemporary critics of the *Four Theories of the Press* like Curran and Park (2000) and Hallin and Mancini (2004) is the suggestion that media systems should be analysed in terms of their underlying ideologies. Notably, having declared the relation between media and political systems central to their own work as well, Hallin and Mancini (2004 p. 7) call the focus on philosophies – or ideologies of mass media – the 'key failing' of the *Four Theories of the Press*. This debate signals the importance of the relation between media systems and ideologies, and can be traced across the theoretical perspectives on global media, as offered by Curran and Park (2000).

Hallin and Mancini (2004 p. 1) propose their own classification of the world's media systems based on comparative analysis, but confine its scope to the 'developed capitalist democracies' of Western Europe and North America. This apparently leaves the post-socialist societies and all other world regions out of the picture – an omission to which I shall return later in this chapter. Hallin and Mancini (2004 p. 11) identify three media system models in the societies of the West: 'Liberal' in Britain and North America; 'Democratic Corporatist' in northern continental Europe; and Polarized Pluralist in the

Western press. The remaining two models compete in the democratic liberal societies of the West: the Libertarian; and its later modification – the Social Responsibility model.

Mediterranean and southern Europe. The Liberal model is described as relatively dominated by market ideas and commercialism. In the Democratic Corporatist model commercial media coexist historically with media tied to organised social and political groups, and the state plays a strong role. The Polarized Pluralist Model sees media integrated in party politics, weaker historical development of commercial press, and a strong role of the state.

Hallin and Mancini (2004 p. 251) acknowledge a rapid diversity loss between the three media models that has been taking place since the 1970s. A homogenization process has reached the point, where, in the authors' account, 'it is reasonable to ask whether a single, global media model is displacing the national variations of the past'. It seems that the structures, practices and values of previously diverse media systems are being substantially displaced by those of one: the Liberal Anglo-American media model, which in turn undergoes significant developments.

Conflicting viewpoints exist on some of its features, particularly regarding the existence and power of indigenous traditions and practices that are not necessarily US-based (for a summary see Örnebring 2009a). While the evidence of homogenization and Americanization of media systems seems overwhelming (Lee 1976, Barnhurst and Nerone 2001, Høyer and Nonseid 2005, Pöttker 2005), there are studies that question the 'Americanization' argument on different grounds. In light of the detailed critique by Tunstall and Machin (1999) and acknowledging the existence of national variations and indigenous traditions, Hallin and Mancini's (2004 p.11) comparative approach justifies defining the system that dominates Western media as 'Anglo-American,' and primarily controlled by market forces.

Terminological connections exist among media systems, models, and journalistic practice. Deuze (2005 p. 445) compared the arguments around the existence of universal standards of journalism and concluded that: 'journalists in elective democracies share similar characteristics and speak of similar values in the context of their daily work, but apply these in a variety of ways to give meaning to what they do'. For the purpose of my research I have taken on board Hallin and Mancini's explanation that their work focuses primarily on the relation between media and political systems, and its emphasis is on the analysis of journalism and news media. The difference between the characteristics and values on one side, and the practice on the other, is important for the proposed analysis. I do recognize that the diversity of terms used to analyse and conceptualize mass media and journalism requires more meticulous dissection. What is clear at this stage is that the territory of interest for this research project is where journalistic aspects of mass media systems – the 'cultures', 'traditions' and 'identities' of journalism – meet the 'values', 'ideals', 'principles', 'norms', and 'rules' that shape its practices as a 'profession', 'occupation' or 'craft'.

A theoretical distinction between the knowledge domains of society and culture positions journalism practice in the latter (McQuail 2005). Hanitzsch (2007 p. 369) defines 'culture' as 'a set of *ideas* (values, attitudes, and beliefs), *practices* (of cultural production), and *artefacts* (cultural products, texts)' [sic]. Based on his review of various interpretations, Hanitzsch offers the following description of journalistic culture:

Journalism culture becomes manifest in the way journalists think and act; it can be defined as a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists, consciously and unconsciously, legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful for themselves and others. (2007 p. 369)

This definition suggests the importance of understanding better how journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful. Deuze (2005 p. 444) suggests the answer to this question should primarily rely on conceptualizing journalism as an ideology. Hanitzsch (2007 p. 370) offers a more complex approach. He portrays journalism culture as a dynamic battleground of distinctive arrays of journalism-related values, orientations and predispositions. These distinctive arrays are the 'professional' or 'occupational' ideologies of journalism that serve as cultural 'cement' according to Hanitzsch.

Following a definition offered by Hanitzsch, ideology can be understood as a system of organised ideas that form internally coherent ways of thinking, resulting in a set of values, orientations and predispositions; and, in a critical Marxist and specifically Gramscian perspective, as struggle over domination and hegemony. In this sense a 'professional ideology' is again a system of ideas, thoughts, and values, which articulate themselves as dominant or counterhegemonic, and are exclusively related to journalism. Such professional ideologies, as depicted by Hanitzsch, struggle over the dominant interpretation of journalism's social function and identity, in the arena of journalism culture.

The suggestion that journalistic culture – and practice as part of it – can be deconstructed and interpreted as a set of underlying – and opposing – professional ideologies invites a parallel to the disputed stand of Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) that global media systems should be understood in terms of their underlying political and economic ideologies. This line of thought suggests further inquiry into the relationship between professional or occupational ideologies of journalism on the one hand, and political and economic ideologies at large on the other. Such analysis needs to be rooted in comprehensive understanding of the specifics and details of the actual practice of journalism and news production and the professional norms that guide them.

2.3. Journalistic norms in the practice of news production

One way of understanding the professional practice of journalism is by looking at journalists' working routines and processes that are rooted in it, and understanding the norms that guide them. Certain news production studies portray news production as a process that emerges in newsrooms and is based on professional journalistic decisions and actions (Gans 1979, Boyer and Hannerz 2006, Hout and Jacobs 2008). Such decisions are often based on professional values and norms such as novelty, objectivity, balance, authority order, news selection, rules of structure, language and writing of texts, among others (Bennett 1996, Boykoff and Boykoff 2007, Grünberg and Pallas 2013). Studying the rules that guide political content decisions in the news, W. Lance Bennett (1996 p.375) defines three "not-always-compatible normative orders" that rationalize journalistic processes: professional; political; and economic ones. The first normative order gathers norms of the journalism profession, like objectivity, balance, fairness and cross-checking sources. The rules, routines and traditions that journalists adhere to while doing their jobs belong here. The second order regulates the 'proper' role of the press in politics and society, where Bennett provides for example journalists' watchdog role in promoting political accountability by informing citizens of their elected officials' behaviour. So this order of norms defines the mission of journalism in society, and legitimizes a journalist as a socially responsible actor. The third order, deals with the business side of mass media operations. These are the norms which define the place and role of a journalist in the market operations and profitability of mass media organisations. Professional norms of journalism grouped in these normative orders interact and shape editorial realities that are in the centre of my research interest.

The interaction between professional norms in practice is well documented and analysed by various news production studies, which offer a rich knowledge base for the purposes of this project. A significant proportion of these studies examine the power relations between journalism and other actors, in view of establishing journalists' ability to guard public interest and perform watchdog functions. One perspective emerges whereby journalists appear in dependency to politicians who hold information and sources that are vital for the production of news (Epstein 1973, Sigal 1973, Molotch and Lester 1974, Tuchman 1978, Gans 1979, Fishman 1980, Cook 1998, Manning 2001, Gans 2003). Some observers view the relationship between journalists and political sources as one of mutual dependency (Gans 1979, Fishman 1980, Bennett 1996, Lewis, Williams et al. 2008), or even adversarial (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). At the same time alternative or non-official sources are often treated with less credibility and given lower prominence by journalists (Entman and Rojecki 1993, Croteau and Hoynes 1994, Livingston and Bennett 2003).

Eriksson and Östman (2013) draw a useful distinction for the purpose of this research: that journalists' level of enactment of their watchdog role varies between two key stages of news production. The first one is the phase of interaction between journalists and sources, while the second is the phase of news-construction where journalists are mostly alone with their peers and editors. Based on field research in Sweden Eriksson and Östman (2013) conclude that journalists appear less adversarial during direct interaction with their sources at news conferences, but their autonomy increases in the later phases of the process – when journalists produce their actual stories. These observations set an important benchmark for this research project: the importance of studying journalistic practices in different stages of news production.

In addition to the background and characteristics of individual journalists (Pappu 2007), the nature and range of beats, general divisions and other organisational structures of newsroom operations, news production studies suggest yet another formative factor for the changing professional practices of journalism: specialisation. Specialist correspondents, editors and other editorial contributors often hold different views and interpretations of professional values (Örnebring 2006, Schwitzer 2009, Hanusch 2010). Responding to an online poll by the Regional Environmental Center (REC), journalists from South Eastern Europe indicated that they have higher confidence in non-governmental and campaign sources than in official ones (Tabakova and Antonov 2003). Different attitudes to issues like climate change, nature protection, biodiversity conservation and other fields of environmental reporting, varying levels of engagement with social movements around them, as well as changing interpretations of professional norms are well documented by core studies of environmental journalism (Hansen 1993, Smith 2000, Carvalho and Burgess 2005, Boykoff 2011). News production and journalistic practice research covers a broad variety of specialised studies of various news production stages and circumstances, such as televised news (Eriksson 2011), election campaigns (Hallin 1992, Patterson 1993, Strömbäck and Nord 2006) and press briefings (Clayman, Heritage et al. 2007, Eriksson and Östman 2013).

The traditional view of journalistic practice as a more or less autonomous mechanism of professional decisions and actions within a newsroom setup, governed and regulated by professional norms and ideologies, is not universally accepted. There are views that suggest that the relationship between news production and the processes, values, ideologies and norms in societies at large is broader and more complex (Cook 1998, Aldridge and Evetts 2003, Clayman, Heritage et al. 2007). Grünberg and Pallas offer the following description of this process:

The work on professional norms brings forward a view of news production as a process that is based in systems of taken-for-granted norms and values that reside in social systems that are considerably broader than journalistic ones. (2013 p.219)

This perspective suggests a possible explanation for the increasing level of confrontation between journalists and politicians in power, observed by relatively recent news production studies (Hallin 1992, Entman 2004, Clayman, Heritage et al. 2007). While increased prevalence of adversarial relations between journalists and officials may be interpreted as an encouraging sign of improved independence of journalism and stronger watchdog function (the advance of the internet and new media may also have contributed to this), the possibility also emerges that journalists may be turning against the politicians and elected officials because of other loyalties and interdependencies, linked to the political economy of journalism and mass media (Schudson 1989, Herman and Chomsky 2008).

2.4. Changes in the field, professionalism and the political economy of journalism.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of the journalistic field helps conceptualizing the developments and factors that shape the experiences and practice of journalists. Bourdieu (1984) defines a field as a partially autonomous universe featuring symbolic struggles, and dominated by a group of actors bonded by shared core values, undisputed beliefs and common practices. Its adherence to a social order is accepted as self-evident and taken for granted (Bourdieu 1993, Benson and Neveu 2005). Bourdieu (1998a) interprets the journalistic field as a similar universe of journalists and media organizations, whose interactions are determined by the by their reactions to different levels of political and economic pressure, and by the

ways in which journalists position themselves within a tradition and among their peers. Bourdieu explains the weakening of journalism and its increased dependence with the expansion of the journalistic field closer to the economic one. Today's relevance of Bourdieu's pre-social-networking era approach is justified by in the following way by Russel:

Bourdieu's field approach to media studies is more relevant than ever given the context of today's media landscape, where the codes and norms that guide reporters and editors and that shape the content of news stories are being worked at by increasing numbers of people contributing news product through, for example, weblogs, so-called metanews or commentary sites, mobile phone instant messaging, do-it-yourself journalism, and real-time video sites. All of these play loosely with standards and stream easily across editorial borders. (2007 p.286)

The journalistic field and the professional aspects of journalism should be explored further with caution, following Roger Dickinson's (2007) warning to balance broader sociological perspectives and the narrow occupational aspects of journalism studies. The purpose is to avoid falling in the trap of portraying professional journalism as merely a set of professional 'traits' (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p. 548). Instead, Aldridge and Evetts (2003 p. 549) portray professionalism as a complex discourse, constructed and utilized by managers in news organizations, by journalists themselves, and by the public. Employing mechanisms of occupational socialisation and identity formation within the professional community, this discourse introduces effective self-discipline and control of journalists'

working practice (Fournier 1999 p. 290). As part of the professionalization discourse, in order to comply with established professional standards, journalists submit themselves to both:

- external 'organisational hierarchical supervision, checking and correction' (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p. 556), which is aided by increased occupational training and university education; and
- internal individual self-control, routed in the Foucauldian sense of normalisation in governmentality, which depend on the gradual internalizing and self-imposing of external controls.

Here is how the discourse of professionalism enables effective control of journalists. First, the parameters of what should be considered professionally acceptable are set and imposed on journalists both by means of training and education, and by in-house organisational controls. Then journalists impose these parameters on each other as part of professional socialization, and struggle to comply with them in order to maintain their professional self-identity. Scholars and journalists alike have been ambivalent about professionalization of journalism. The arguments around journalism's aspirations to be a traditional profession like medicine or law fuel the debate around the normative function of mass media (McQuail 2005), and more specifically, the social responsibility function of journalism as part of liberal democracy. This function is conceptualised by the 'Fourth Estate' theory of press freedom, shaped in the late 19th century by John Stuart Mill, which drew upon the power of the press to inform the public, and postulated press freedom among the benchmarks of representative liberal democracy. 'Fourth Estate' theory has provided the normative basis for media ethics and for the on-going attempts to produce self-regulatory codes of journalism that reflect it ever since. However, it became apparent by the end of the 20th century that press liberty, conceptualized mainly around economic freedom and opposition to government control, failed to deliver the advance of freedom and democracy

that it was supposed to in 'Fourth Estate' theory. Instead, the press was increasingly turning into a "means of making money and propaganda for the new and powerful capitalist classes and especially the 'press barons'" (McQuail 2005 p. 170). The role of media owners in applying pressure on journalism to reflect and serve their interests, rather than serve its social responsibility functions is well interpreted from the perspective of the political economy of mass media (Herman and McChesney 1997, Bagdikian and Bagdikian 2004, Herman and Chomsky 2008). The occupational aspects of employment have suggested that journalists working for media organisations are more likely to be answerable to their employers and managers, than to themselves, or the public interest (Carr-Saunders and Wilson 1933, quoted by Albridge and Evetts 2003).

This competition of loyalty has been ideologically coloured ever since. Journalism education and the ideology of professionalism that backs it have been driven by more than the quest for knowledge and professional standards. They have also been driven by the desire of media owners to have a workforce that is "moral, orderly, habitual, and conservative". The urge for professionalization, associated with the promotion of professional norms and journalism education has historically aimed to foster journalists' loyalty to the interests of their employers, and "end their flirtation with socialism and trade unions" (Carey 2000 p. 16). Carey's observations of professional education in the US, and the consecutive work of Aldridge and Evetts (2003), dictate the importance of examining closely and critically the role of professional education in the shaping of journalism culture and practices – a conclusion of major relevance to my research interest, in light of my continuous involvement with professional training for journalists since 1994. While Allan (2010 p. xxxii) finds Carey's treatment of John Pulitzer's educational heritage "rather provocative", he acknowledges that the professionalization of journalism can be seen to normalize social exclusion. Deconstructing subtle, and seemingly "common sensical" factors like class, race or gender, renders explicit "the gap between the rhetoric of

journalistic identity and its lived materiality”, Allan (2010 p. xxxiii) suggests. Using the example of the UK, Aldridge and Evetts (2003) demonstrate that individualism has been traditionally entrenched in journalists’ occupational ideology which led to the rejection of collective professional representation and regulation formats by journalists.

2.5. Normative and occupational changes that reflect neoliberal influences.

The concept of objectivity plays a pivotal role in journalists’ professional ideologies. It postulates separation of fact - or news - from comment, and is rooted in the original assumption that a journalist’s function is to serve the public in an honest, unbiased way. But objectivity implies also “moral and emotional detachment from topics and subjects of news” (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p.559) which:

- makes it professionally less acceptable for journalists to reflect upon their personal emotions and thoughts, while reporting on news stories; and
- justifies producing the expected end product ‘by all means’ – regardless of personal or social values and moral obligations.

Recent scholarly views see the theoretical ideal of objectivity as increasingly problematic (Thorsen 2008 p. 938, Carpentier and Trioen 2010). Fairclough (2003) speaks of journalism norms representing the Anglo-American-centric point of view and suggests that their supposedly neutral stand is based on liberal capitalist orders of discourse. Journalism norms and traditions, such as objectivity, are traditionally seen as filters to the influence streams by national leaders, public information officers and other public relations professionals on the mass media agendas. Tensions have been identified among the various underlying norms and practical rules that guide journalists in their daily representations of

the political world. Underlying journalistic norms like balance (related to the concepts of objectivity and neutrality), authority order, dramatisation and novelty have been observed to direct news reporting decisions to prioritize the messages of certain groups over others (Bennett 1996). Evolving complexities around the application of professional norms transpire in journalists' engagements with issues like the anthropogenic nature of climate change (Boykoff 2007), climate scepticism (Jacques 2008, Jacques, Dunlap et al. 2008), nuclear power (Antonov 1998), genetically modified organisms (Hughes 2007) or activism (Cottle 2008).

Taking further the argument around the occupational changes in journalism, Örnebring (2009b p. 2) confirms that there is external pressure to redefine and renegotiate its concept of professionalism. Certain labour transformation practices that conduit this pressure, include: deregulation of labour markets; proliferation of flexible employment; outsourcing; technologisation of the workplace; and deskilling of parts of the workforce. This includes loss of specialisation of skills and working tasks required by a contemporary journalist, as well as loss of thematic specialisation (Powers 2012). Temporary and project-based employment for journalists, as well as the availability of citizen-generated content online, as a result of market readjustment suggests radical transformation of today's media systems, which is 'profound and probably often painful for thousands of individual journalists who will lose their job or see their vocation transformed' (Nielsen and Levy 2010 p. 4).

The evolving norms and changing occupational practices of journalism listed above pressure journalists to redefine and renegotiate their professional identity to better accommodate the market, business and political interests of media owners. These features match the description of changes in the journalistic profession linked by Örnebring to the advance of the 'new economy' – a term commonly used in relation to the advance of

information, telecommunication technologies and innovative industries(OECD 2007 p. 519). The concept of 'new economy' was conceived in the embrace of Ayn Rand's libertarian objectivism by the 1990s dotcom boomers in Silicon Valley, and subsequently labelled by Bourdieu and Wacquant (2001 p. 1) as one of the buzz-terms of 'newspeak' – the new 'planetary vulgate' of neoliberalism. Other terms used to describe aspects of the same set of political and economic views and practices include: economic rationalism; monetarism; Thatcherism; Reaganomics; neoconservatism; managerialism; contractualism; the Washington consensus and market fundamentalism (England and Ward 2007, quoted by Aligica and Evans 2009). Among these terms 'neoliberalism' signifies the extension of market relationships over other forms of political and economic governance; and has enjoyed intensive analysis and scholarly debate within social sciences over the last two decades along three major types of analytical interpretation: as a policy framework; as an ideology; and as a form of governmentality (Larner 2000 p. 6).

Neoliberalism is described as a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by 'liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey 2005 p. 2). This theory has been rendered into an operational doctrine through a network of think-tanks such as the US-based Heritage and Cato foundations and the Adam Smith Institute (Peck and Tickell 2002). In the aftermath of the global economic crisis of the 1970s neoliberalism has emerged as a set of economic policy instruments. This has been possible by legitimizing the pretence that free markets could offer the most effective and fair organisation of social life that equalizes social outcomes and allows wealth to 'trickle down' from rich to poor (Smith and Rochovská 2007). Neoliberal rules that have gradually replaced the preceding Keynesian policy regime, include fiscal discipline, reductions in public spending, tax reform in favour of market investors, liberalisation of interest rates, competitive exchange rates, trade

liberalisation, encouraging foreign direct investment, privatisation, deregulation of the economy and securing private property rights (Peet 2007 pp. 111-112). The global outreach and implementation of neoliberal policies has been made possible by international financial institutions and multilateral agencies. The main ones among them have been the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Aimed predominantly at trade liberalisation and reducing government intervention, the reforms they have heralded paved the way for the implementation of the neoliberal doctrine (Peet 2007). Criticised for bringing deeper inequality in the distribution of benefits from economic growth - both between and within countries - (Frank 2000, quoted by Couldry 2010), neoliberalism has appealed across social and political divisions with its pretence that free markets could deliver the most fair and effective organisation of societies. This has made it possible for the neoliberal doctrine to be adopted at the same time by societies in very different social, economic and political conditions, including for instance developed and wealthy capitalist countries like the USA and the UK and communist China under Deng Xiaoping (Harvey 2005).

2.6. Post-socialism as study ground of market and business influences on professional journalism.

The gates were opened wide for the advance of neoliberalism by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. It marked the collapse of socialism in CEE and in the former Soviet Union soon after. What followed has been referred to as one of the boldest projects of contemporary history (Smith and Pickles 1998, Smith and Rochovská 2007) – the attempt of driving straight into capitalism following a neoliberal roadmap. In the early 1990s the post-socialist countries in CEE were quick to dismantle the international military and economic support networks that connected them to the Soviet Union: the Warsaw Pact and the

Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Joining their western equivalents – NATO and the EU - was embraced as a priority by their governments. But accomplishing these goals took over a decade during which western multilateral agencies and government advisors moved in to guide and oversee the so-called ‘transition’. ‘Transition’ was viewed conventionally as a one-way process during which economic liberalisation and marketisation, tied with democratisation, should lead to market economy and a liberal polity. This vision of change from one hegemonic political and economic system to another ‘reduces the complexity of political and economic change and fails to provide a basis for moving beyond policy prescriptions that describe transition as a set of end points’ (Smith and Pickles 1998 p. 2). During the 1990s a new dominant discourse described by Derrida (1994 p. 51, quoted by Smith and Pickles 1998 p. 6) had proclaimed that ‘Marx is dead, communism is dead, very dead, and along with its hopes, its disclosure, its theories, and its practices’. Instead, it imposed capitalism, the market, political and economic liberalism, as the only viable way for social development.

What followed for over two decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall was a test-case for observing Doreen Massey’s ‘power geographies’ of place and space – characterised by the symbiotic functioning of global governance whereby bureaucracy, expertise and finance concentrated in the West expand their power over ‘dependent peripheries’ (Peet 2007 p. 2). After the vanishing of what used to be known during the Cold War period as the ‘Second World’⁵ the post-socialist region was effectively downgraded on the scale of development. It was converted into a ‘gigantic classroom’ (Kuus 2007 p. 153) where ‘neoliberal policies, tried and found wanting in the West’ could have a rerun a decade later (Harloe 1996, quoted in Kuus 2007, p. 153). A ‘transition’ discourse according to which CEE was a backward learner and a field for experimenting with neoliberal Western models has been imposed and embraced by large sections of post-socialist societies and their

⁵ See Verdery (2010) for a discussion of the use and meaning of the terms ‘First’, ‘Second’ and ‘Third’ world.

political and economic elites. It has gradually displaced from public view any existing notion of CEE possibly offering an alternative modernity, with innovative, socially progressive practices that could improve capitalist models. Instead it set the role of post-socialist societies as competitors in the process of 'catching up' with Europe and the West in general, manifested politically and economically around their race for joining the EU, while receiving 'support' and guidance from neoliberal international financial institutions (Kuus 2007). What makes CEE countries significant for the purposes of contemporary social and political research is that after all this, and unlike other such dependent peripheries, they have eventually reached a point of integration into the political and economic organism of the West by starting the process of full EU accession, with the first CEE countries joining in 2004.

A growing body of research has challenged the concept of 'transition' (Verdery 1996, Gille 2007, Jehlicka and Smith 2007, Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008, Gille 2010, Stenning, Smith et al. 2010, Vujošević, Zeković et al. 2010). It has demonstrated that countries of the CEE region had possessed social, economic and policy practices and solutions of their own that were not necessarily inferior to contemporary Western models that have replaced them. One area where this is particularly visible is nature protection and environmental sustainability, where existing models were indiscriminately replaced by new Western practices based on the drive for ever increasing consumption and unlimited economic growth (Peterson 1993, Dingsdale 2002, Schwartz 2007, Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008).

It would not be possible to sustain that neoliberalisation alone has shaped the social, political and economic landscape of post-socialism. Yet, as members of the EU today, or on the way to joining it soon, two decades after the end of socialism, societies of CEE offer a suitable ground for observing and analysing the advance, construction, domination and

implications of neoliberal values over all aspects of life, politics, the economy and social developments, including ones in the field of journalism. Here knowledge of the processes in the societies of the West are undoubtedly of key importance, not least because of their function of role models, donors and mentors for other regions – like the post-socialist world. In their new role of apprentices largely stripped off their pre-1990 ideological, political and organisational structures, post-socialist societies have experienced a direct injection of neoliberal capitalism. Its effects on their democratic institutions – including journalism and the role of mass media – have been more difficult to overcome, as they lacked the relatively stronger democratic and civil society traditions of the West.

With its empirical basis covering solely Western Europe and North America, Hallin and Mancini's (2004) work seems to reaffirm concerns about the self-absorption and parochialism of Western media theory (Curran and Park 2000). However, their observations of the advance of a dominant market-driven and Anglo-American media model – and journalistic culture consecutively – set an important landmark. Comparing the variety of arguments around it Örnebring (2009a p.12) concludes that Europe might be better equipped to “withstand” the dominant Anglo-American journalistic culture than other regions. This is due to its inherited diversity of viable indigenous journalistic traditions. It is reasonable to suggest therefore, that the advance of a dominant culture of journalism should be easier to trace in regions where there is less diversity of indigenous traditions of journalism. CEE has been one such region. With its own pre-1990 traditions of journalism weakened and denied value the post-socialist region has offered a welcoming ground and little resistance to the dominant journalistic culture that advances from the West. An important detail to complete the picture is that the norms of western journalism that relate to its democratic and social functions according to the “Fourth Estate” theory, are not rooted in local media regulations, traditions and practices either (Kaveshnikov 2007, Pietiläinen 2008, Pusnik and Starc 2008).

Downing has provided clear justification for expanding the knowledge of journalism practices in a relatively less studied region such as CEE:

We need to dethrone from their privileged position the stable replication studies of stable media communication processes of politically and economically stable nations. (2008 p. 44)

There is at least one more argument to add in favour of this appeal: the increased ability of CEE countries to shape European affairs since their joining of the EU. Following two decades of neoliberal 'treatment' post-socialist journalism at present is in a condition which needs to be carefully monitored and analysed.

2.7. A theoretical framework for analysing neoliberalisation in the post-socialist journalistic field: loss of 'voice,' participation and 'dialogue.'

A conceptually rich base for analysing neoliberal influences on journalism is offered by Nick Couldry's (2010) work on 'voice'. It builds upon Hallin and Mancini's (2004) observation of the loss of diversity among different media systems and the journalism cultures and practices associated, but adds a variety of cultural, psychological, social and geographical dimensions to it. According to Couldry:

A particular discourse, neoliberalism, has come to dominate the contemporary world (formally, practically, culturally and imaginatively). That discourse operates in a view of economic

life that does not value voice and imposes that view of economic life on politics, via a reductive view of politics as the implementing of market functioning. In the process of imposing itself on politics and society, neoliberal discourse evacuates entirely the place of the social in politics and politics' regulation of economics. (2010 p.2)

Couldry (2010 p. 2) interprets 'voice' as a connecting term that counters neoliberalism's views, challenges its claims, and enables alternative views of politics that value, for instance greater diversity and social cooperation. It suggests that the value of 'voice' goes beyond the particular views or voices of groups in a society, as it "articulates some basic aspects of human life that are relevant *whatever* our views of democracy or justice." 'Voice' is socially grounded – and not the practice of individuals in isolation. It requires material and social resources, which provide access to language, for instance, the socially recognised status of "having a voice." It is important and possible, therefore, to realize how much 'voice' journalists in the post-socialist societies still possess, if any.

Couldry's concept of 'voice' offers a theoretical framework for this PhD project, which intends to consider whether social and democratic functions of journalism, defined by the 'Fourth Estate' theory, are indeed diminishing in the face of business and market priorities in CEE. For this purpose it should be possible to clearly observe on-going neoliberalisation of social, institutional and normative environments of journalism in post-socialist journalistic practice. Post-socialist journalists should be seen to be losing touch with the social and democratic aspects of their profession; becoming less able to identify collective social problems and act upon them; and more likely to support the market imperative in their work and everyday lives. Other features of neoliberalisation to look for in the post-socialist context would include 'domesticated' market and business values that penetrate

almost all layers of professional and individual life of journalists. Inherent individualistic imperative, which tends to collide with journalists' otherwise relatively high sense of serving the collective interest, would also signify creeping neoliberalisation. Other symptoms of the market and business imperative in the media field should include the reproduction by, for example, reality entertainment TV formats of rituals of performance in the contemporary neoliberal workplace, the imposing of downward-directed class judgement, competitiveness, 'self-improvement', distorted recognition of celebrity, among wider features of neoliberal culture (Couldry 2010 pp.77-81). An additional indicator to look after is suggested by Pierre Bourdieu's (1998a) analysis of television and journalism. According to it journalists tend to impose on the public a political vision that is grounded in the very structure of the journalistic field and reflects on journalists' specific interests produced in and by this field. Connected to the process of giving an account of one's life and its conditions (Couldry 2010 p.7), the concept of 'voice' also offers a useful methodological trajectory for this research. It offers a means of applying the accounts of journalists themselves regarding the large scale political changes and their consequences for aspects of the practice and reception of journalism as they transpire from their life experiences.

To observe and analyse the abundance, or lack, of the above-mentioned symptoms of neoliberalisation of the journalistic field, it is appropriate to look into borderline zones where neoliberalism competes with other discourses. Such zones involve professional and personal situations in which journalists experience the tensions between collective social interest and the business and market imperative, and need to decide how to act upon them. One such borderline zone has emerged around environmental and climate change, which has emerged as an important public discourse in many western countries (Toke 2000). Dominated by the understanding of civil obligations to collectively address ecological destruction and loss (Grundmann 2007) climate change brings a strong leverage against the

logic of pure market and deregulation. Therefore, it seems to be on a collision course with neoliberalism, which calls into question any collective structures that could hamper the logic of the pure market (Bourdieu 1998b). This is why the rise and high profile of climate contrarian claims and communication could be interpreted as a typical neoliberal reaction (Jacques 2008).

Climate change, its scale and causes, have been framed by Western media as a global environmental problem, thanks to systematic scientific communication. This is a possible reason for the mounting interest in the relations between journalism and climate change at the time when I was starting this research project. Practitioners' accounts of journalistic coverage of climate change politics and summits, for example in 2009 in Copenhagen, were collected and analysed in detail (Hansen 1993, Smith 2000, Painter 2010). Evolving complexities of journalists' choices between collective and market values have been identified in the media coverage of scientific findings of anthropogenic nature of climate change (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004, Boykoff 2007), climate scepticism (Jacques 2008, Jacques, Dunlap et al. 2008), disaster narratives and the public perceptions of climate change (Lowe, Brown et al. 2006). Useful background is available in the literature on various aspects of the ways that journalists cover scientific sources (Carvalho 2007, Bienvenido 2008, Stocking and Holstein 2009) or environmental policy events (Petersen 2007); and nuances associated with the specifics of different media formats – e.g. agencies (Bielsa 2008) or tabloid newspapers (Boykoff 2008). Tensions among different normative orders of journalism have been detected in the Anglo-American journalistic practice and well documented (Smith 2005, Boykoff 2007, Carvalho 2007). Pressures, applied on journalists' work in the environmental and climate field from both media-external sources and in-house editorial dynamics, have been holistically compared and analysed by Hansen (2010).

As demonstrated by these and many other studies, journalistic reporting of the scientific findings and debates around climate change has been crucial for the public's improved awareness and preparedness for policy and economic measures that address it. Joe Smith (2005) exposes the influence of media culture, technology and practice developments influence upon public's perception of climate change. Smith's work has suggested a dialogic turn in which communication is conceived not as a one-way flow of knowledge but as a dialogue among participants where knowledge is co-produced collaboratively (Phillips 2011). Among different stakeholders whose voices are expected to be articulated in the dialogic process of public participation, journalists are of particular relevance as gatekeepers in relation to the presence in mainstream mass media of the collective voices of the public. In comparison, the access of authorities and political decision-makers to mass media coverage is traditionally institutionalised through the system of beats and government press offices, while the interests of the business sectors are increasingly well protected as well (Bennett 2002).

The seemingly underprivileged position of collective and public voices in the process of 'dialogue', as far as mass media are concerned, invites further conceptualisation of 'voice' as a collective value that goes beyond the views or voices of particular groups and enables greater diversity and social cooperation (Couldry 2010). 'Voice' in this sense appears closely linked to pluralism, diversity and liberal democracy – and to the process of 'dialogue' – as opposed to a dominant market and economy-related neoliberal discourse, which heavily circumscribes collective participation in participatory forms of democratic activity. Public participation offers a fascinating meeting point of the two concepts, which provides an extra dimension to each of them: a stronger sense of participation, understood as interactivity, interdependence and reflexivity in the process of 'voice'; and emancipated prominence of collective public voices in relation to the ones of other stakeholders, such as government or the business, in the process of 'dialogue'. From the perspective of public

participation, it is then important to analyse the extent to which journalists open up for dialogue, and tolerate 'voice' in general, and the articulation of civic voices in mainstream media pages and news broadcasts in particular.

Climate change is an issue which cuts across many of societies' components that determine the political economy of journalism, while at the same time challenging the inherent assumptions of how capitalist societies work. These assumptions dominate Western journalism's values systems. Bourdieu (1998a) describes how journalists impose on the public a political vision that is "grounded in the very structure of the journalistic field and in journalists' specific interests produced in and by the field." It is useful to examine the manifestations of this dichotomy in a post-socialist context where neoliberal thinking is accepted much more uncritically by editorial decision makers. Paradoxically, many of them actually have started their careers in the conditions of a state socialist system and officially critical attitudes to the West. Dissecting the motivations and considerations of their judgments upon climate change related story dilemmas could reveal processes of redefinition of journalistic norms and practices.

Another observation that suggests that post-socialist societies offer a fascinating and less studied ground for understanding both the political economy and practices of environmental journalism is that western norms of journalism are not well rooted in local media regulations, traditions and practices (Kaveshnikov 2007, Pietiläinen 2008, Pusnik and Starc 2008). Tensions and even open conflict are therefore more likely to clearly transpire in the process of coverage of climate and environmental change. Based on his analysis of media developments in Russia, Poland and Hungary during the 1980 – 1995 period Downing (1996) argues that studying social movements, particularly outside the western world, needs to be an integral part of media and communications science.. Ever since the political changes in CEE during the 1980s journalists have been integrally

connected to the emerging green movements. And while some aspects of their relationship with environmental organisations may have been chillier during the following decades, journalists are engaging with the re-emerging green activism of the mid and late 2000s. Sükösd (2005) and Sarre and Jehlička (2007) provide entry points to understanding green movements in the post-socialist context.

The mosaic of scholarly disciplines covered by the argument presented so far suggests the need for an inherently integrative research approach, bringing together various fields including anthropology, economics, history, international relations, linguistics, philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology. Downing suggests that geography is well suited to provide the necessary interdisciplinary base for such exercise:

Geography at the present time is the only well-established discipline whose practitioners regularly come close to bringing together a full range of foci and methods under one roof. (1996 p. xiv)

This conclusion is confirmed by the abundance and relevance of geographic perspectives across the research base of my research project as summarized in this chapter.

2.8. Conclusions.

A liberal Anglo-American system model which dominates the ever-homogenizing Western mass media field is internally controlled by market values and business forces (Hallin and Mancini 2004). As suggested by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956), global media

systems could be understood in terms of their underlying political and economic ideologies. Establishing the underlying political and economic ideology of today's dominant Anglo-American model of journalism requires an inquiry of professional or occupational ideologies of journalism, which could be performed by examining everyday journalistic practice and checking how journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful. Journalists' understanding of what their professional role entails is an important indicator in this context. It reveals professionalism as a discourse that facilitates the interests of corporate media ownership and imposes a set of market and business values. At the same time it leaves little space for journalists to perform their obligations determined by 'Fourth Estate' theory, which have provided normative basis for capitalist media ethics and are ingrained in liberal democracy concepts like freedom of speech and media freedom.

News production studies reveal conflicting practices, routines, rules and norms of journalism that are unable to secure journalists' ability to function as public interest watchdogs. The commitments of journalism to democracy and public interest seem to be competing with – and increasingly giving way to journalists' loyalty to media owners' interests. Employing mechanisms of occupational socialisation and identity formation within the professional community, the contemporary professional discourse of journalism introduces effective self-discipline and control of journalists' working practice (Fournier 1999 p. 290). In line with Bourdieu's vision, established and undisputed professional norms in the journalistic field are instrumental for submitting journalists to both external "organisational hierarchical supervision, checking and correction" (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p. 556), and internal self-control. These norms could be grouped in three distinct normative orders: professional, societal and business oriented (Bennett 1996). The balance among these orders seems to be shifting in favour of business and employment considerations that define the place and role of a journalist as part of the political economy

mechanism of mass media. These normative developments within the professional discourse of journalism are matched by deregulation of labour markets and the influx of new occupational and employment practices, including temporary and project-based employment; proliferation of flexible employment; outsourcing; technologisation of the workplace; and deskilling of parts of the workforce (Örnebring 2009b). Professional education contributes to the process by shaping the culture and practices of journalism that pressure journalists to redefine and renegotiate their professional identity to better accommodate the market, business and political interests of media owners (Carey 2000, Aldridge and Evetts 2003).

The trends and features described so far suggest that dominant model of contemporary Western journalism accommodates a neoliberal pro-market and pro-business ideology. A neoliberal discourse that extends market relationships over other models of social, political and economic interaction and prioritizes individual, corporate and business interest over collective social needs, dominates journalistic practice, norms, occupational mechanisms, and education. This domination can be observed well in post-socialist societies that offer a fertile ground for the advance of a dominant Anglo-American commercially-driven journalistic culture. Having lost or given up many parameters of their indigenous social and political constructions post-socialist societies have turned from disputed territories between competing ideological modernities into dependent peripheries, swiftly overtaken by the neoliberal project. Challenging the popular discourse of 'transition', which simplistically presents the developments in the region as linear development between two set points (Smith and Pickles 1998 p. 2) reveals post-socialist Europe as ground for studying and analysing the advance, construction, and implications of neoliberalism. Having formally joined the EU, post-socialist societies offer a valuable opportunity to examine and analyse normalisation of neoliberalism in journalism and its everyday practices.

Narrowing down Hallin and Mancini's (2004) observation of the loss of diversity among different media models to examining the implications of a market and commercial imperative on journalism invites Couldry's (2010) interpretation of 'voice' as a connecting term that confronts the advance of neoliberalism. On the basis of 'voice' it is possible to design a set of indicators for detecting the domination of neoliberal market and business imperatives over the practice of journalism in post-socialist societies. These include:

- journalists losing touch with the social and democratic responsibilities of their profession and the societal and professional norms of journalism presupposed by the 'Fourth Estate' theory;
- tendencies to domesticate market values in newsroom settings or in the reporting field;
- refusal to engage with collective social or environmental problems and to identify with the interests of social groups that act upon them;
- professional formats that prevent in-depth analysis and investigation, and impose entertainment, celebrity and reality formats;
- loss of creativity and diversity in journalistic produce; and
- weak and ineffective professional education, failing to convey the social and democratic responsibilities of journalism.

These indicators of the dichotomy between neoliberalism and 'voice' form the first building block of the theoretical framework for this research. They could be observed and analysed more clearly in a borderline zone in which the neoliberal discourse is confronted by another discourse that brings a strong leverage against the logic of pure market. One such discourse is climate change (Grundmann 2007): dominated by the understanding of

civil obligations to collectively address ecological destruction and loss. Substantial scholarly work has documented various communication, media and journalistic aspects of climate change, demonstrating tensions in the application of different normative orders of professional journalism. Scholarly analysis of the communicative interaction among science, the public and journalists over climate change has suggested a dialogic turn in which communication is conceived not as a one-way flow of knowledge but as a dialogue among participants where knowledge is co-produced collaboratively (Smith 2005, Phillips 2011). Journalists' attitudes to different stakeholders whose voices are expected to be articulated in the dialogic process of public engagement are indicative of their ability and willingness to serve as gatekeepers of collective interest. While applied journalistic norms seem to facilitate government communication and business interests (Bennett 1996, Hansen 2010), it is essential to establish the extent to which journalists are able and willing to engage with social movements and campaigns over issues and problems of collective interest like environmental and climate change.

CHAPTER THREE

Method and Field Research Design

3.1. Structure and purpose of this chapter.

As demonstrated in the introductory chapter, the research focus of this project lies in the balance between journalists' commitments to public interest and democracy on the one hand and the growing interference of economic and market priorities in their daily work on the other, as it transpires in journalistic practice. More precisely, I am interested in the ways in which norms, routines and practices of journalism shape journalists' engagement with environmental issues of collective importance. The review of scholarly approaches and arguments, presented in Chapter 2, identified a set of terms, concepts and findings, which I shall rely upon in the attempt to answer the research question. It has also helped me define a theoretical framework, which I will use for the purpose of analysis, and has suggested the relevance of focusing it on the post-socialist region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

The present chapter outlines the methods of collecting research data and explains why they are most suitable for applying the theoretical framework to answer the research question. Different research methods are analysed and compared for this purpose. Two essential parameters are set: the optimal field for empirical data collection; and the profile of the target group of this research project. The research field is narrowed down to one country – Bulgaria, and then to two particular newsrooms. The chapter explains the reasons for these

choices. Further it describes the collected data and demonstrates how the theoretical framework will be applied to it.

3.2. Research question and theoretical framework.

The research question has guided the choice of methods:

How do professional journalists balance their normative commitments to society and democracy with the increasing dominance of economic and market priorities over their work, when covering issues of collective interest – such as environmental change?

The grammar of the question places ‘journalists’ and ‘balance’ in the centre of attention as, respectively, the subject and predicate of the sentence. At this basic level of analysis the research question presupposes a focus on individual human beings and their specific actions in real life, rather than pure analysis of theoretical concepts. This claim dictates the need of performing empirical research, and suggests the use of methods which should enable the researcher to probe into the individual and personal aspects of journalistic practice: the decisions, motivations, actions and inactions of individual journalists. The research question therefore narrows down the spectrum of available methodological approaches to ones which enable the researcher to:

- observe and study individual journalists’ opinions, decisions, reactions and actions in practice;

- examine how they engage with issues of public interest and collective importance, such as the ones linked to environmental change;
- identify influences related to market, commerce, economic and business considerations on journalists' practice; and
- compare these influences to journalists' commitment to the ideals and practice of liberal democracy, postulated by 'Fourth Estate' theory.

Accomplishing these research objectives involves establishing how journalists define and conceptualise their own professional duties, roles, and obligations, and the way in which they apply these conceptions in real life. It also involves direct observation of the procedures, processes, formats that shape editorial practice. Completing these objectives requires almost unlimited access to journalists' daily routines and a great deal of reflexivity during data collection. Allan's (2010 p. xxxiii) suggestion that "the gap between the rhetoric of journalistic identity and its lived materiality" is rendered specific by subtle, and seemingly 'common sensical' factors like class, race or gender provide important methodological guidance. It speaks to the need to identify methods that would allow me to study these 'common sensical' factors as they appear in the everyday practice of journalism.

To identify the range of methods to be used for the purpose of this research I have examined previous studies with similar or related focus and purposes, comparing the methods applied by their authors, and selecting the ones that have proven most successful and delivered quality results. Researchers commonly use quantitative methods such as content analysis of articles or other published material (Antonov 1998, Barnhurst 2011, Costera Meijer 2013) and surveys (Dickinson and Memon 2011). Qualitative and ethnographic approaches among them enable researchers to gain knowledge of both social organization and the understandings and perceptions of the participants in such social

settings (Silverman 1997). My research follows a similar pattern and aims to study the human interactions of journalists with environmental or other public interest issues and the actors associated to them on the one hand, but also the interactions that occur among professional norms in the journalistic practice on the other. This is why I have decided to rely on a set of ethnographic and social approaches.

Following the guidance of Hansen (1998), Machin (2002), and Pryke et al. (2003) I have examined and compared a variety of qualitative research methods, commonly used in social and media studies, seeking to identify the ones that could make it possible to accomplish the research objectives listed above. Among qualitative methods certain scholars opt for focus groups (Dickinson and Memon 2011), qualitative content analysis of online survey results (Tabakova and Antonov 2003). But the specific focus of the research question on the way in which journalists respond on a daily basis to clashing and changing professional parameters and norms requires in-depth insight of their daily lives, routines and actions. Such insight can successfully be obtained through ethnographic approaches (Hansen 1998). In support of this, Boyer and Hannerz write:

The ethnography of journalists offers more fine-grained insights, on the one hand, into the *mediating practices of representation and circulation* without which there would be no media, and, on the other, into the *institutional and professional schemes and technical instrumentaria* that wreathe, suffuse, and to some extent set conditions of possibility on the mediating labors of journalism.

(2006 p.8)

In the light of my project's interest in the personal and professional decisions made as part of journalistic practice, an important consideration is that ethnography enables unearthing data on multiple aspects of a practice and provides an invaluable context for assessing the articulatory process in practice. (Erjavec and Kovacic 2010). But it is also suitable for studying the broader range of political and economic factors that shape journalistic practice. This is confirmed by Uzzi (1996) who justifies the use of ethnographic methods for establishing how mechanisms by which social structure affects economic outcomes – an important leverage, given my project's focus on the interrelations between social and economic reasoning in journalistic practices.

Methods involving ethnographic approaches to the study of social and media processes include: ethnographic participant observation of journalists' professional and personal activities; semi-structured interviews with journalists and media decision makers to obtain their own takes on what is happening in their working practices; and elements of qualitative content analysis of media publications to get an idea of what actually comes out of these practices. Among them, following the repeated guidance of other news production scholars, and in order to obtain research data which thoroughly reflects upon I have looked closely into ethnographic participant observation and semi-structured interviews.

3.3. Participant observation.

Participant observation is a data collection method for obtaining complex, intricate, and often personal data (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Its applicability across the range of engagement contexts between journalistic norms and local practices, outlined above, justifies the choice of ethnographic participant observation as the backbone method of my research. It is well suited for sharper understanding of journalists' professional and

personal engagement with collective causes around environmental and climate change. My interest in participant observation is inspired by seminal news production studies, many of which rely upon ethnographic observation methods (Epstein 1973, Sigal 1973, Molotch and Lester 1974, Tuchman 1978, Gans 1979, Fishman 1980, Cook 1998, Manning 2001, Gans 2003) . In brief, participant observation requires the researcher to embed into the actual practice of journalism, enabling him or her to closely observe and understand the editorial processes, mechanisms and decision-making. In my particular case it would mean positioning in post-socialist newsrooms and gaining unobtrusive access to the professional and private dynamics of journalism, focusing on its engagement with environmental, climate change, or other collective causes.

Selecting ethnographic participant observation as my primary research method requires addressing certain conditions. Following Murphy's (2008) dissection of ethnographic approaches as applied to mass media research, I have looked critically into my personal role and background in relation to the research project. My history as a practising journalist, environmental journalism trainer and activist in CEE has taken me to undertaking this research in the first place. Among the positive sides of this is the possibility to make use of my existing connection and relationship to the research community for the purpose of the research project. Parallel to the theoretical reasoning, outlined in Chapter 2, my knowledge of journalists, media decision makers, as well as environmental activists and experts across the post-socialist region has offered me a solid marker to keep in mind while conceptualising the research methodology. The obvious downside of this was the possibility of allowing my own standpoints, preoccupations, likes and dislikes influence the scientific credibility of my research. Having identified this as a primary risk for the quality of this study, I adopted a cautious reflexive approach, which involves relentless scrutiny of my presence in the research field, actions and inputs, as well as my analytical observations and conclusions for traces of personal bias.

Before deciding on the specific locations in which to implement my research, it had become clear that it should have to involve journalists, media decision makers, and possibly environmental activists. While in this case my personal contacts have helped me obtain access to the research field, they have also raised some questions of both practical and moral importance to my fieldwork. How should I deal with people who perceive me as a colleague, fellow-journalist and environmentalist, or a friend? What would be the most ethical way to gain their trust, while using their working and professional routines and any information they share as sources of research data?

I have found satisfying answers for these questions in the concept of participatory action research (PAR). PAR adopts the principle of research as a democratic process in which participants occupy the role of active citizens within the study (Reason and Bradbury 2001). Applying the principle of researching 'with' rather than 'on' people I have conceptualised journalists and all other relevant actors as participants rather than objects or target group members. This way they have obtained a much more equal status in my research, thus resolving any ethical issues around possible power relationships forming between me and the research participants.

PAR encourages institutional affiliations beyond the academic realm and builds on the concept of social science consultancy within a certain institution (Sofer 1972). But I needed to make sure that my role of a researcher would not be hampered by issues of power within the institutions that would host me. I have been particularly cautious to secure an independent neutral standpoint for my research while shaping my relationship with the management of hosting mass media organisations. Such a standpoint should allow me to collect and analyse research data independently, avoiding the perception that my research is meant to accommodate purposes of mass media management, or any other

purposes in the field. There was not supposed to be any other agenda for my research activities, other than the research agenda outlined in Chapter 2. PAR allows for embedding the researcher in existing structures, organisations and processes, without necessarily making his or her research purpose and methods match the purpose and needs of the organisation's management. This concept offers the much-needed standpoint of an observer who is trusted by the management enough to gain access to most editorial spaces and processes, while not being perceived as part of the management by the research participants.

3.4. Qualitative semi-structured interviews.

In order to understand the driving forces behind journalists' actions and choices it is necessary to capture their views, explanations and interpretations of what is going on in the world, their country and their job. The necessary subtlety of understanding of both personal and professional factors and motivations is possible to obtain by using semi-structured interviews. According to Gubrium and Holstein (2002), semi-structured interviews are suitable for extracting participants' insights around the issues of interest, while benefiting from unexpected interpretations and revelations derived from their individual experiences. They capture an insider's view of a process or issue, from which my research will benefit. They should also provide an opportunity to extract participants' unique insights around the known issues of interest, while benefiting from unexpected interpretations and revelations derived from their individual experiences. Not least, semi-structured interviews have the advantage that they could be conducted throughout the research period in all suitable settings, including ones offered in conjunction with other

research methods. I opted for face-to-face interviews in order to be able to observe voice, intonation and body language, which are important social cues (Irvine, Drew et al. 2013).

3.5. Data collection field design.

Choosing an appropriate field for the empirical part of this research required identifying the suitable venues where journalists' engagement with issues of collective importance around environmental and climate change could be observed and documented. I identified three such venues, all of which shape the data collection field of this research. Given the primary interest of my work in the professional aspects and practice of journalism, dictated by the research question, my first priority was to observe journalists in their working environment. Two major components of this environment seem equally attractive as research field venues: (i). the newsroom, and (ii) the reporting field. In addition, certain aspects of journalists' engagement with issues of public interest, more particularly the ones related to individual histories and motivations, can be studied in (iii) the personal domain of journalists where they communicate with their friends and families. All three types of venues offer suitable observation ground for studying journalists' engagement with 'voice' in terms of journalist norms of plurality, reflecting on the dominant neoliberal discourse in society, and collective public campaigns around environmental issues which require citizens' participation in decision making and dialogue with authorities, the business and other social stakeholders, or similar types of events. Below I shall summarize the way in which I have scoped each of them in preparation for this research project.

- (i) A newsroom is important in the context of the present research both as the physical 'place' designated for the editorial side of media work by a mass media organisation and as the 'space' defined by cultures, ideologies and norms where the professional identity of

journalism shapes and operates. While deciding on the profile of potential newsroom placements for my empirical research I considered a few factors. Well aware of the media technology consolidation and the advance of the internet, I still aimed to cover as many of the traditional media technologies as possible: radio, television and press. Given the particular interest of my research in the relationship between the business interests of media owners and the practice journalism, I chose for the purpose of this study to exclude public or state-run media newsrooms – recognising that these offer an important field for further examination of the advance of economic and market-driven priorities vis-à-vis the societal functions of journalism.

(ii) Journalists' reporting field is the broad arena outside of the newsroom where they appear and operate in their professional capacity. It is not only the physical place where journalists go to obtain information or report on events, but also the frontline of ideas, social and political concepts. Journalists' approach and orientation to this frontline is of great importance to this study, particularly where issues of collective and social importance such as climate or environmental change are opposed in it to constructs and ideas linked to market fundamentalism and other aspects of the dominant neoliberal discourse. Fieldwork is also important, as it is a primary scene of journalists engaging directly with external protagonists of professional norms. These are the political leaders and press officers whose influence on media agenda is 'filtered' through journalism's norms and traditions (McCombs 2004). But also, in the case of environmental and climate change, these are the advocacy groups, international and local policy makers and scientists who also exercise influence on journalistic norms. This is why I have sought to identify reporting situations, themes and topics, where tensions along these lines could be observed most clearly. These include social movements, campaigns and protest actions around which journalists' personal and professional engagements with the issues could be successfully explored.

(iii) The personal sphere is an important source of motivations and driving forces that shape journalists' professional actions to one extent or another. In many cases it is even difficult to draw a distinct line between private and professional in a journalist's life, as journalists often act professionally upon their personal feelings and experiences, while making personal choices in their work (Bennett 1996, 2002). This is why, in order to improve the chances of obtaining as much of a comprehensive picture of these motivations and driving forces as possible, the present research could not possibly exclude the private sphere as a field for gathering useful research data, with extreme caution, from both methodological and ethical point of view.

3.6. Justifying participants' profile.

An important question that still needed to be answered before I could safely embark on my field research was: who would be the most appropriate people with whom to do this research? Based on the research question's formulation I chose to focus primarily on professional journalists, either employed by a mainstream media organisation or freelancing for one or more such organisations. News reporters, feature writers and regular columnists seemed equally suitable as sources of valuable research data. In addition, I aimed to include higher level editorial decision makers who could possibly cast light on the mechanisms that shape journalists' actions and attitudes to the collective social causes around environmental and climate change that I am interested in. These should include, for instance, senior editors, media executives, or owners and proprietors of mass media operations. I have to acknowledge here that non-professional journalists, including bloggers, writing activists, experts, analysts and other occasional writers constitute an integral part of 'voice' in Couldry's (2010) sense and their role in serving the public interest over environmental change issues deserves further scientific attention.

There are various types of professional involvement with environmental and climate change or other issues of collective social interest that this research was planned to examine. With my focus on Central and Eastern Europe more or less predetermined, I have realised that it would be unlikely to come across many journalists whose primary working domain, expertise or beat is in these particular fields. While identifying the journalists covering or working on these issues was an important guiding marker for my fieldwork, I was prepared to search for the climate and environmental change discourse in the work of correspondents, editors or other editorial staff covering other thematic domains, such as: health; energy; industry and economy; finance; international relations; and crime.

Experience, professional skills, university education and professional training in journalism are essential features of research participants, in light of my interest of their understanding and interpretation of professionalism in journalism. Other factors that I have also given thorough consideration have included gender, age, ethnicity and other personal features of my research participants, although none of these has been a decisive factor for including or excluding a participant in the research.

3.7. Bulgaria as a context for post-socialist media research fieldwork.

Having established the value of focusing this research project on the realities of post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), I have had to determine the actual placements for my empirical research. There have been two primary criteria that I have used for this purpose and across my planning process altogether: theoretical applicability and operational feasibility. I have considered the former criterion to be of primary importance in the selection of research placement, as part of it I have sought to identify the countries

and societies where my theoretical approach could be applied with the highest chance of successfully collecting valuable data and providing valuable analytical contribution. The latter criterion regarding the feasibility of practical arrangements I have chosen to apply only where necessary to narrow down the choice within potential countries that have already met the former one.

Based on the observations made in Chapter 2 regarding the unique position of CEE as a region formally integrated in the political and legal structures of the West whilst serving as a neoliberal classroom and testing ground, it has seemed reasonable to explore neoliberalisation and the way it affects journalism in the new member states of the European Union (EU) across this region. In fact, in the early stages of planning my work I seriously considered implementing a comparative study that would involve more than one country from this part of the continent. But this plan has been over-ambitious, given the timing and capacity limitations of a PhD research, so I looked into choosing a single country for my fieldwork instead.

In order to choose a country in the post-socialist region to be used as study ground, I sought to compare the complexities of post-socialist change in society, and the impacts of a neoliberal discourse upon them. Among the countries in the region where transformation of the economy and the establishing of new administrative mechanisms and democratic institutions have been most painful and time-consuming is Bulgaria. During the 1990s the partial and incomplete measures to impose market economy, such as price liberalization privatization has turned the good part of the 1990s into a period of crisis for Bulgaria (Smith and Pickles 1998). Bulgaria can therefore be seen as a case of slower adaption of market economy and neoliberal models to existing command economy models, and as a country typical for the situation of economic decline and 'disinvestment' in CEE in the years after 1989 (Begg and Pickles 1998 p.118). A currency board was introduced in 1997

with a peg to the Euro, monetary policies have been constrained, similar to the small Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, and neoliberal economic and fiscal policies have been implemented. Bulgaria's democratic development has also been relatively slower and among other post-communist democracies. Bulgaria's electoral and political party system underwent modifications and has characterised by higher degrees of electoral volatility and a great number of short-lived parties lead by single, sometimes populist, leaders (Kostadinova 2013). Similar to Slovakia and Romania, Bulgarian democracy has not been functional until relatively late, with the former communist party remains a chief player in the political arena to date. Having been the last of former COMECON members to have joined the EU in 2007, Bulgaria enjoyed relative economic stability during the post-2008 economic downfall period and is slowly catching up with EU's GDP per capita levels (Yorgova 2011). At the same time the country experiences steady decline of media freedom and journalistic independence and ranks lowest among EU member states (Basille 2009) – a syndrome to be analyzed further in the light of political economy of mass media in Bulgaria.

All the arguments mentioned above suggest Bulgaria as a legitimate study ground for understanding both the complexities of the post-socialist change in society, and the impacts of a neoliberal discourse on them. This possibility is of natural interest for me, given my deep understanding of the processes that shaped journalism in this country since the early 1990s and my fluency in the Bulgarian language. Yet, I would rely on scholarly argumentation, so I checked the possibility of using Bulgaria as empirical research ground against the core literature that I am working with. What makes the post-socialist media landscape of Bulgaria an appropriate empirical context for the purpose of this research? The choice of Bulgaria can be seen as a response to Downing's (2008) call for expanding the knowledge of journalism practices in relatively less studied regions. Moreover, the choice is justified by the view that, as part of the post-socialist region of Central and

Eastern Europe (CEE), Bulgaria belongs to a pilot testing ground for the neoliberal doctrine (Smith and Rochovská 2007). With its own pre-1990 traditions of journalism weakened, Bulgaria – as part of CEE – has offered little resistance to the market- and economy-dominated model of journalism that advances from the West. On this background, it offers a suitable empirical field for examining journalists' engagement with collective environmental and health causes in relation to issues of democracy and public participation.

Having confirmed the methodological and conceptual validity of choosing Bulgaria as a field research country, I also considered the feasibility criterion. It brought into consideration a set of practical arguments. First, given the choice of method described earlier, it seemed essential to choose a country where I could have reasonable understanding and control of the local language. This immediately ruled out many countries in CEE where I did not speak and know the local languages up to a level that would permit me to work as a participant observer in a mainstream media newsroom, including Hungary, where I live. Ability to use a local language has limited my choice to the countries of former Yugoslavia, among which the only EU member state was Slovenia whose language is most alien to me; the three small Baltic states, where I could possibly work in Russian-language minority media; and my home country, Bulgaria, where I would enjoy the luxury of using my mother tongue for the purpose of research.

At this stage already it seemed quite logical to opt for Bulgaria. But there was another practical argument that worked convincingly in favour of Bulgaria: access. Indeed, what was crucial for the success of my research was the ability to negotiate and gain access to mainstream newsrooms. A brief probe of old media contacts left over from my early days as a television reporter of *Nova*, the first privately-owned TV station in Sofia, soon delivered encouraging feedback.

One last question remained to be answered: was it a good idea for me to return as a researcher in a field where I have been – and still am – quite active professionally? The question seemed even more relevant in the light of the ethnographic elements in my chosen methodology, and even seemed to pose additional ethical dilemmas. Was I really going to be able to properly explore the actions, motives, thoughts and ideas of journalists, many of who had been my former colleagues and remained good friends? Would this be fair to them? And would I be prepared to operate as an unbiased observer given my own history of involvement with both journalism and environmental activism over the past decade?

Several reasons helped me answer these questions positively. First and very convincing was the fact that a vast majority of the studies of media and journalism, including ones implementing similar participant observation methodologies to mine, had been conducted in the USA and the UK by local researchers. One such example was Fishman's (1980) work that I had already discovered as an inspiring model to follow. A popularly-written but very sound study of Englishness by British social anthropologist Kate Fox (2005) did also encourage me to think that observing and analysing the people of my kind should not be impossible. Regarding friendships, I thought that I was well positioned to offer sensitive and sympathetic understanding of whatever my fellow journalists and friends were going through – hopefully somewhat better than an alien researcher would. And while indeed I had moved a great deal into expert support and campaigning around environmental causes, I was relieved to hear Doreen Massey, a prominent geography professor at the Open University, proudly share her own personal story of an academic-turned-activist at a PhD students' seminar.

3.8. Choosing the research placements.

With the choice of country already made, I proceeded with choosing newsrooms that would meet the requirements described earlier. Drawing upon the theorisation in my analytical framework of journalistic professionalism as a discourse that enhances control and self-discipline, generally in favour of the media owners' interests (Aldridge and Evetts 2003), I have sought to identify the normative aspects of professional journalism that stress its social responsibility functions in line with the 'Fourth Estate' theory. Most of these aspects have been incorporated into the Bulgarian Media Ethics Code (NCJE 2004) signed by over 90 mass media organisations. At least formal editorial commitment to Western-style journalism norms has therefore seemed a reasonable requirement to follow in the selection of editorial placements. A wide range of highly-circulated newspapers and electronic media had to be left aside, therefore, because they had either not signed the contract, or did not appear to make an attempt to comply with it.

I chose earlier to avoid the so-called public media, which in the case of Bulgaria were very much state-dominated and fell under a different range of influences. For the purpose of understanding better the influence of business owners on Bulgarian journalism it seemed appropriate to search for a mix of ownership while selecting newsroom placements. So I sought to identify newsrooms owned both by local Bulgarian business proprietors, and by foreign or multinational corporations.

After a brief period of establishing and re-establishing contact with mainstream mass media decision makers in Bulgaria and exploring their willingness to offer me access to their newsrooms, I was able to choose two placements: an agenda setting media group

which publishes a range of periodicals, and a private nationally broadcast television network:

i. The first negotiated editorial placement for my empirical research in Sofia involved participant observation in the newsroom of *Capital* – a business weekly newspaper considered among the few “quality” media outlets (Tabakova 2007: 317) due to its editorial policy of commitment to journalism standards promoted by Reuters and other Western economic media outlets (Roudnikova 2008). *Capital* shared a newsroom with its sister daily *Dnevnik* [Diary]. While oriented and designed for a limited business audience, the two publications were effectively embraced by an audience of well-educated professionals and decision makers of all ages. Both *Capital* and *Dnevnik* were being published by Economedia, a media group owned privately by Bulgarian businessmen. Remarkably, two of the group’s owners had been the founding editors of *Capital*, who had then moved on to become successful business entrepreneurs in various other fields: Ivo Prokopiev and Philip Harmandjiev. Over time *Capital* entered in alliances with Reuters and the German Handellsblatt group; the latter briefly became a shareholder in *Capital*’s newly-founded publishing company Economedia during 2005 – 2007, but eventually it was owned entirely by *Capital*’s founders by the time of my field research.

ii. The second editorial placement identified and negotiated in Sofia was the newsroom of private national television broadcaster BTV, officially a subsidiary of News Corporation at the time (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2007), and a leader in viewer ratings and market share among television networks. While keeping a distinct commercial profile within a diverse programming mix, *BTV* had been aspiring to build an image of reliable and comprehensive news coverage, maintaining a dynamic news team and a network of correspondents across the country. Parallel to Rupert Murdoch’s News Corporation, BTV’s ownership had been linked by media reports to one of Bulgaria’s

emblematic media business figures at the time: Krassimir Guergov. Described as the biggest player in the advertisement market in Bulgaria, Guergov had officially admitted to be just a consultant to the foreign owners of BTV by the time of my empirical research placement, and only later acknowledged being the network's co-owner (Smilova, Smilov et al. 2010).

With the two editorial research placements secured, I assumed that identifying possibilities for researching journalists' fieldwork and personal sphere would be done after the beginning of my fieldwork. For these I planned to rely upon my uninterrupted contacts with journalist colleagues and friends since the time when I studied at the Journalism and Mass Communications Department of the Sofia University, and was part of Nova Television's first news team. Many of these contacts had remained in journalism, occupying editorial positions in many Bulgarian newsrooms, including the ones of BTV and *Capital*. I also intended to employ my continuing involvement with Bulgaria's environmental movement, which dated back to 1994.

3.9. Ideology and corporate responsibility at BTV and Capital.

Environmental and climate change were already conceptualised as suitable topics against which journalists' exposure to the mainstream neoliberal discourse could successfully be checked. For this purpose, keeping in touch with active environmentalist groups, activists and experts from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) seemed promising, as they were a source of collective demands for public participation and dialogue with authorities. Journalists' involvement and participation with such campaigns and their messages promised a rich field for research data excavation.

I also took some time to investigate the prior history of engagement with environmental and social issues and campaigns of both the mass-media organisations selected as empirical research placements. Characteristically, they both demonstrated distinct agenda-setting power: *Capital* as an authoritative source of news and analysis for political and business decision makers and politicians; and BTV as a national broadcast television channel with the highest audience share and profound influence on the general public. Neither of the two media organisations had manifested preferences to a certain political ideology or party. Both had a more or less defined identity of commercial mass media, operating on a market basis.

Parallel to its projected image of a successful business-driven corporate organisation, BTV had demonstrated a growing aspiration to portray itself as socially-responsible television. It is described on its own website (Bweb 2012) both as the “most-watched TV channel in Bulgaria with over 38% share of all viewers and with leading positions on the advertising market” and as a socially responsible media whose mission is to “form positive values in Bulgarian society.”

In the editorial ideology published in *Capital*’s launch issue, its founders proclaimed that: “nobody tells us how to write.” (Capital 1993 p.3). Their first editorial, entitled “Nobody likes the dog that barks,” identified *Capital*’s political affections as “pragmatic” in the sense that “what works is what makes sense”. Further they wrote: “We like what we consider useful, fair, and good for the country. What is in the interest of the ordinary taxpayer.” They defined their target audience as “both those who have specialised interest in the economy, and those who have not.” Over the years that followed, the newspaper successfully implemented this reputation, gaining the trust of local and international partners, including the Reuters, which made the first foreign investment in the newspaper in 1994 (Roudnikova 2008).

3.10. *Data types.*

After all the conceptual, theoretical and practical preparations, I was able to begin my field research in Sofia from the beginning of November 2009. While offering detailed descriptions of its implementation in the following chapters, I report here on the data that I was able to collect with the help of the qualitative set of research methods discussed earlier. The research pursued “unstructured” data collection, as described by Hammersmith and Atkinson (2003, p.3). While there were no “fixed and detailed research design specified in the start,” and no pre-set categories for the data, certain concepts had been generated by the literature review and the theoretical framework that I deployed.

The set of data that I harvested in the research field consisted primarily of interview transcripts and field notes. In addition, I also collected published works: books, news, articles, and published analyses of the issues that I have explored, including online material, news reports and other materials produced by journalists, participating in the study, including my own works as a participant observer. I gathered photographic images and material evidence from the research field, wherever and whenever I felt it appropriate and useful. Collected data consists of:

- 21 semi-structured interview transcripts;
- 26 sets of notes from participant observation venues (each set of notes consists of 1 – 5 items such as: handwritten or typed documents; or voice recordings);
- 13 published video, audio and press works, including my own journalistic publications as participant observer news team member; and
- 21 items of material, audio-visual and photographic evidence.

3.11. *Applying the theoretical framework in data analysis.*

In this final section of the chapter I describe the way in which my data was structured and analysed. Based on the theoretical framework I designed a list of knowledge categories that are of interest to my research. During the fieldwork phase of the research I refined and developed the list. Once the collected data had been transcribed or otherwise textualised, I completed the list of knowledge categories. Each unit of data was then coded against the knowledge categories identified. I then analysed the data collected under each knowledge category, thus generating the unique empirical contribution of this project to academic knowledge.

In line with contemporary research technology and following the guidance of the Open University, I installed and operated a piece of qualitative research data software called NVivo. The purpose of using NVivo was to optimise the way in which I handled and analysed my collected research data. In addition to that NVivo facilitated my system of data analysis. I structured the knowledge categories to be applied on research data as NVivo ‘nodes’, and distinguished them as ‘tree nodes’ and ‘free nodes’ depending on whether they could be grouped together. I did not attempt to group the thematic categories necessarily together, into some sort of a systematic grid. About half of the knowledge categories stood alone, while the rest formed clusters. What is important is that as part of my analysis, they all link to the theoretical framework of this research.

Below I present the knowledge categories that emerged before, during and after the empirical data collection. Table 1 illustrates the knowledge grid that connects my collected data to the theoretical framework of this research.

Table 1

Knowledge categories (nodes) connecting empirical data to the theoretical framework.

Knowledge category (Node)	Subcategories (branch nodes)	Connection to theoretical framework
training and education	University; professional training; learning in practice; prevented from training	A primary avenue for the shaping of the professionalization discourse of journalism. It is also how journalists' understanding of what is part of their profession is shaped.
professional self	pride and affection; no idea; freedom; dislike; limits and control; honest journalism	How journalists self-identify and render their work meaningful? This category collects the knowledge gathered about the ways in which journalists perceive and define their profession.
occupational aspects	HR and employment	One of the key areas to scan for neoliberal influences.

Table continues on the next page.

Table 1. Continued.

Knowledge categories (nodes) connecting empirical data to the theoretical framework.

Knowledge category (Node)	Subcategories (branch nodes)	Connection to theoretical framework
editorial practice	opinion; balance; sources; formats techniques - video, audio, montage; show and entertainment; advertisers - the wall to editorial; owners, interest; scandal crime; beats	Probably the most important knowledge category. Norms of journalism, and the ways in which they are interpreted and applied. Various working formats that shape journalists' actions and work products. Serious journalism vs. entertainment and talk show formats. Types of owners' intervention and channels used for this.

Table continues on the next page.

Table 1. Continued.

Knowledge categories (nodes) connecting empirical data to the theoretical framework.

Knowledge category (Node)	Subcategories (branch nodes)	Connection to theoretical framework
political ideologies	neoliberal; liberal; leftist progressive; conservative	Journalists' comments, associating or dissociating themselves from existing political ideologies, or what they think these are. Are they truly apolitical?
causes of collective social value	religion; Climate change; non-smoking; sustainable living; environment; social; non-political; EU	The way in which journalists engage with collective social causes like climate and environment, which require a substantial system change, holds part of the answers to the research question. But do they engage at all? And what other causes are more appealing to them?
social change		Journalists' attitudes to ideas that require system change.
collective		Loss of collective interest as a neoliberalisation symptom.

Table continues on the next page.

Table 1. Continued.

Knowledge categories (nodes) connecting empirical data to the theoretical framework.

Knowledge category (Node)	Subcategories (branch nodes)	Connection to theoretical framework
personal self		How do journalists define themselves as human beings and members of society?
personal lifestyle		Class-determining elements or other relevant information about participants
materialism		Personal qualities and values of importance
consumerism		Personal qualities and values of importance
individualism		Personal qualities and values of importance
societal democracy		An essential part of journalists' profession according to the Fourth Estate Theory. But how much of it remains to still be seen in practice?
Economy market imperative		In direct response to one of the primary research questions. All aspects of the process.

Table continues on the next page.

Table 1. Continued.

Knowledge categories (nodes) connecting empirical data to the theoretical framework.

Knowledge category (Node)	Subcategories (branch nodes)	Connection to theoretical framework
humour		Where and why does it appear? A self-emerged category of knowledge
Persons	Krassimir Guergov; Lyuba Rizova; Magy Maleeva; Milen Tsvetkov	Who are their heroes, and who do they speak about? A list of the persons who get mentioned most frequently.

3.12. Conclusions.

The chapter explains how in the research design phase a set of qualitative research methods were identified to answer the research questions regarding journalists’ engagement with collective issues of social importance in the context of neoliberalisation and marketisation of the profession of journalism. Among the proposed data collection methods, participant observation and semi-structured interviews were identified as the primary tools.

I outlined the parameters of the empirical research field for this project, which allowed for the collection of rich and useful data. I concluded that the suitable venues for gathering such data were: newsrooms, the reporting field, and the personal sphere of journalists. All

these three types of venues offer suitable observation ground for studying journalists' engagement with 'voice', in Nick Couldry's (2010) sense of the word. Hence the project will focus primarily on professional journalists, either employed by a mainstream media organisation or freelancing for one or more such organisations. Apart from newsroom staff and external regular contributors, media and editorial decision makers were included in the project's fieldwork component where possible. Non-professional journalists, citizen journalists, bloggers and other writers were left out of the target group of this particular research, but will be kept in mind as potential follow-up ideas emerge. Activists and social movements around collective issues relating to environmental change will form an essential component of the empirical research setup due to their potential to generate campaigns that make journalists engage with structurally important social and policy choices.

Having established the value of focusing this research project on the realities of post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), the chapter explained the choice of Bulgaria as the context for its empirical research component. This was facilitated by the fact that Bulgaria offers a legitimate study ground for understanding both the complexities of the post-socialist change in society, and the impacts of a neoliberal discourse on them; by my relatively better access to the necessary media decision makers, and my fluency in the Bulgarian language. Concerns about potential methodological risks associated with the choice of Bulgaria were explored but also ruled out.

Based on a list of criteria, including commitment to Western journalistic standards, type of ownership and outreach, the selection of two mainstream media organisations have been selected as empirical research placements were explained: *Capital* weekly and BTV. Further information regarding the structure of ownership and history of both media confirmed them as suitable data venues for gathering data.

The set of data collected during the empirical research phase of the project in Bulgaria included interview transcripts, field notes, published works and materials produced by journalists participating in the study, as well as photographic images and material evidence from the research field. Data was processed by means of qualitative research software NVivo alongside a grid of knowledge categories. A description of the categories was provided which links them to the chief theoretical questions of the proposed survey.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fieldwork and Data Collection Description

4.1. *Introduction and outline of this chapter.*

In this chapter I shall describe in detail the process of fieldwork and data collection for the purpose of this research. The chapter will document and demonstrate the way in which the chosen research method has been implemented in Bulgaria, and will prepare the ground for the analysis of data in the following chapters. I begin by describing the preliminary arrangements, including contacts with newsrooms and editorial decision makers, and other activities undertaken to prepare for the field stage of the project. I will pay special attention in describing the arrangements made to meet the ethical requirements and considerations around my research. Further, the chapter will represent the broader picture of Bulgarian mass media's post-socialist landscape, and will introduce the media organisation, methods, formats and structures, that shape contemporary Bulgarian journalism. I shall then describe the specifics of each newsroom placement, including the setup for my fieldwork in it, the atmosphere and contacts made, and the actual work done. Then, I will describe my other research arenas: the journalists' reporting and personal fields. This will include a brief description of my past and present involvement with the environmental and climate-change movements in Bulgaria, in the time of tense conflict for protecting what are supposed to be protected natural territories from over-construction, and in the wake of the Copenhagen Climate Conference (the COP in December 2009). The chapter will also describe *BezDim* [Smoke-free] – the civil initiative against tobacco

smoking that I got involved with in the duration of my fieldwork, and will demonstrate the rationale, consistent with the research question and theoretical framework, for choosing to focus empirically on it. Finally, I shall summarise the observations and outline a few conclusions from this chapter.

4.2. Preliminary arrangements, contacts with newsrooms.

It is in fact difficult to distinguish the actual date when preparations for fieldwork began. Technically this was supposed to happen after the approval of my research proposal in June 2009. But in fact I had already considered the options and made some preliminary checks much earlier. These were based on the time I spent working as a journalist in Bulgaria since 1993, when I first set foot in the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication of the Sofia University, my work at Nova – Sofia's first private television channel, and the years since 2001 which I spent editing an international environmental magazine in Hungary named *Green Horizon*.

At the very early stage of preparation, while drafting my research proposal, I had a much more general idea of where and on what my fieldwork should focus. This was when I was envisaging a much broader scope for it, involving several countries, a bigger number of newsroom placements and participants, and – consecutively - a significantly larger amount of data collected. With the advance of my literature review and the emerging of the theoretical framework of this project it became clear that one country – Bulgaria – and two newsrooms – the ones of BTV and *Capital* would suffice. As pointed out earlier, even their choice was to some extent a function of existing contacts with top level decision makers and their welcoming feedback to my proposal to include them in this project.

The first agreed placement was with *Capital*. Widely acknowledged as influential amongst opinion formers, and containing well-researched analytical pieces, this weekly newspaper and its daily sibling *Dnevnik* would be a reasonable place for observing practices of quality journalism in Bulgaria. Alexey Lazarov, one of *Capital's* deputy editors in chief, was very supportive to the idea of including *Capital* in this research project and arranged for me a meeting with the Chief Editor Galya Prokopieva in the late spring of 2009. The agreement to perform participant observation at *Capital's* newsroom was soon set.

Similarly, I used an existing contact to BTV's senior management to negotiate access to the channel's newsroom. I held face-to-face meetings with the Executive Director of BTV Vicky Politova, and the Head of News Lyuba Rizova, and achieved their welcoming agreement to conducting fieldwork in the newsroom and around BTV. I worked with Rizova and the core of BTV's news team members in one and the news team of Sofia's Nova TV during 1994 – 1997.

In both cases I was presented as a former colleague and experienced journalist. This was quite helpful for two reasons. First, it made it easier to resolve the issue of trust and confidence, which would normally emerge around allowing an outsider into the core newsroom operations. And second, it made my presence more attractive, as I was perceived as an 'extra hand' in the newsroom. Indeed, the 'participant' part of my participant observation status was agreed to be the one of a regular – although apparently unpaid – member of the newsroom, expected to produce news, articles or other content suitable for editorial purposes.

Apart from negotiating newsroom placements with mass media organisations, I also worked to obtain access to processes and venues that would secure my access to journalists' reporting field. These involved communication with environmental and climate

change activists, and – quite accidentally in fact – led me to joining a spontaneous civic campaign around tobacco control legislation in Bulgaria. I shall provide details around these involvements and their value to my research work later in this chapter.

4.3. Ethical arrangements and considerations.

Of course, the concept of participant observation raised a number of ethical issues that I considered and handled carefully before and during my fieldwork. As a participant observer I was in quite a delicate position of responsibility and trust to the media organisations and newsroom management; the journalists and other research participants; and the activists and citizens campaigning around collective interest issues like climate, environmental change, and public health – as far as tobacco smoking is concerned. Rather than being in a no-man's land, I was rather in an 'all man's land' in terms of loyalty, trust and responsibility to all these different actors.

In order to handle this position properly and prevent any failure, I designed an ethical research plan which was submitted to and approved by the Open University's research ethics authorities. While implementing this plan, in line with the best practice recommendations for participant observation, I opted for treating the journalists and other persons I communicated with as participants to my research. All members of the newsrooms received written information outlining the purpose of my research and method, and their rights as participants. Every participant who was interviewed or otherwise contributed directly to my data collection work signed an informed agreement on paper. In selected cases where this was not practically possible, verbal agreement was obtained from research participants.

Even with all these precautions, I had to make some ethical decisions in the course of my work. In various research occasions I observed or was part of situations that offered valuable data. In some of these situations people participated who did not know who I was and what I was doing. These included for instance people whom I met and interviewed during reporting tasks assigned by the news desk, and participants in public rallies and other campaigning activities that I attended. While it was practically impossible to inform all these persons of my mixed roles in these events, I strictly avoided using any personalised information that could be used to identify any of these people. In fact the only information from such encounters that I used for the purposes of this research has been publically available – e.g. through published media appearances or other public statements.

In the process of the work I made it very clear to media managers and senior editorial staff that my work involves confidentiality and protects the sources of information received, regardless of who they are. While I used this argument to reassure them that the reputation or operations of their media organisation would not be harmed by their decision to permit my access to it, it also indicated to them that I should also protect the journalists and other resource participants from any possible harm resulting from my work.

In order to accomplish maximal safety for all participants I chose to anonymise those of them who were interviewed or otherwise directly contributed to my data collection process. For the sake of anonymising participants I changed their names to fictional ones. In spite of these measures it remains theoretically possible for readers, particularly ones familiar with the journalistic field of Bulgaria, to identify some of the speakers by their positions. I warned all participants about this possibility and informed them that they could withdraw any statements or information contributed to the project at any time, unless it was already published. I referred to key actors in the field with their real names when using available sources – both academic and journalistic – but strictly concealed their identity as

research participants. In only one case this was not possible due to the specific role of the participant and I obtained her written consent to disclose her input under her real name.

4.4. The broader picture of Bulgaria's mass media's post-socialist landscape.

Prior to starting my fieldwork I mapped on Bulgaria's media landscape the balance between democratic and social commitments of journalism on one side, and the economic and financial priorities on the other, as they transpire in the relationship between journalistic practice and issues of collective social importance like environmental and climate change. To build the picture of Bulgaria's media landscape by the time of conducting my field research I relied on scholarly books and articles, as well as analytical papers and reports, published in English and Bulgarian languages. In line with the theoretical framework of this research I shall now try to describe the stage, as it was set for the empirical phase of my research. For this purpose I shall look at mass media development and ownership as it has evolved during the post-socialist period, keeping an eye on several parameters of the relationship between professional journalism and 'voice' (Couldry 2010). These relate to the social and democratic functions of journalism, as defined by liberal journalism theories summarised by McQuail (2005), and its disposition to the state, political and economic powers in society. I shall take into consideration the advance of social media and internet and their influences on the mass media landscape.

While constructing the Bulgarian media picture I was sensitive to the 'transition' discourse, critiqued in Chapter 2, which conceptualises the relationship between journalism and democracy as part of a unidirectional transition process of importing and instating of Western formats and mechanisms. Typical of this discourse is Raycheva's (2009) view that a centralised, state-owned and politically subordinated pre-1989 media system of

“monotonous, instructive and politically controlled” journalism was replaced by decentralised and pluralistic mass media, a competitive market (p.166), and “liberal journalistic ethics” in post-socialist Bulgaria (p. 174). Too good to be true at best, such a black-and-white vision fails to detect the actual complexity of shades and factors that shaped the country’s journalistic field by the late autumn of 2009 when the present research was bound to begin. I will demonstrate below that neither pluralistic mass media, nor a competitive market and liberal journalistic ethics were fully available in Bulgaria’s post-socialist media landscape by the end of 2009.

The relationship between journalism and democracy reflects various, often divergent, factors in the course of Bulgaria’s post-socialist political, economic and social developments. One should keep this clarification in mind while assessing Raycheva’s (2009 p.166) claim that “it was the mass media which were the quickest and most flexible to react to the transformation of democracy after November 1989.” Indeed, Bulgaria’s democracy took a long and winding road of transformations over the past two decades (Peeva 2001, Ganev 2006, Spirova 2008) during which mass media freedom was formally established as a constitutional norm and private ownership thrived (Daskalova 2010). But in spite of the formal discontinuation of direct ownership and control of the media under the state socialist system, the so-called public media never got fully emancipated from the domination of the government in power up to date. Arguably, this domination was less ideological, and more focused on securing favourable media coverage for the political leaders in power, and distributing the access to resources and power within the public media organisations. The primary ones among them are the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) – which adopted a public medium’s identity relatively successfully (Tabakova 2010) – and the Bulgarian National Television (BNT), as well as the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency. Both BNR and BNT operate several channels on national, regional and international level.

Bulgaria's private media did not do much better in terms of independence from political and state control. While private press and radio outlets were booming during the 1990s, privately-owned television was the slowest to emerge (Smilova, Smilov et al. 2010). Regionally-licensed TV broadcasters dominated the private market until 2000 when the first private channel with nation-wide aerial coverage was finally licensed: BTV. Until then BNT enjoyed a de-facto monopolistic access to the nation-wide television frequency. Private media ownership was much quicker to spread during the 1990s in the radio and the press (Tabakova 2010). But that in itself did not necessarily guarantee democratic plurality of journalism. A wave of partisan journalism and media outlets owned by newly emerging political parties during the early 1990s was soon subdued by another wave: that of economic and commercial domination over mass media (Daskalova 2010). Inherent lack of transparency and media ownership, regulatory deficiencies, weak and arbitrary law enforcement prevented the emerging of a functional media market (Smilova, Smilov et al. 2010). An unhealthy "pseudo-market" was formed (Spasov 2000 p.34) whereby independence and quality of journalism were often sacrificed for the sake of securing income and profit of the media owners.

Shallow, sensationalist and even manipulative journalism gradually became the norm, particularly in the thriving privately-owned press industry of the mid-1990s, with entertainment, scandal and crime reporting displacing and diluting in-depth analysis and quality journalism formats. With a few notable exceptions during this period, quality press outlets either disappeared from the market, or acquired a 'hybrid' character, adopting tabloid formats and 'yellow press' quality of journalism (Tabakova 2010, Lozanov 2011 p.14). The advance of foreign ownership on the media landscape did not bring about the desired financial stability and journalistic quality (Popova 2004). Foreign owners prioritising profit and investment return preferred to avoid trouble with the local

authorities. Rather than boosting quality journalism, their presence became yet another factor of commercialisation and prioritisation of economic interests over the social and democratic duties of mass media.

The period after 2000 was marked by the licensing of commercial privately-owned nationwide television channels BTV and Nova, and the advance of foreign multinational media corporations in Bulgaria's television market (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2007). Yet, no substantial improvement could be observed, neither in the evolving of a free competitive media market, nor in the field of democratic and independent journalism. By the end of 2009 when this project's empirical research phase was about to begin Bulgaria's media landscape had entered a new phase where the following trends could be observed:

- drop in circulation and further retreat of quality press in the face of 'yellow', sensationalist, tabloid press represented by new weeklies, such as *Weekend* and *Show* (Lozanov 2011);
- consolidating ownership of mass media and further distortion of the market by new aggressive players like the New Media Group (Daskalova 2010, Smilova, Smilov et al. 2010, Tabakova 2010);
- ineffective and cumbersome regulations still enabling political and economic control of mass media and the evolving of symbiotic "hybrids" between media and political structures (Smilova, Smilov et al. 2010 p.70);
- weak and dysfunctional journalistic trade unions (Tabakova 2010) and insufficient civil society support for journalistic independence (Raycheva 2009); ineffective or non-existent ethical self-regulation; increased self-censorship and deteriorating quality and independence of journalism (Smilova, Smilov et al. 2010); and

- declining freedom of speech and spreading practices of direct instrumentalisation of journalism for the political and economic purposes of media proprietors (Basilie 2009, Raycheva 2009, Smilova, Smilov et al. 2010).

The developments in the media environment described above reflected the advance of populism and the blurring of traditional ideologies in Bulgarian and post-socialist politics. This process involves ideological and organisational “lightness” of political parties and increasing the weight of public relations and media in the political process (Smilova, Smilov et al. 2010 p.70). These were paralleled by the advance of the internet which had profound influence over traditional media outlets (Lozanov 2011). It provided them with a new technological channel which most of them used to expand their market outreach and audience numbers (Raycheva 2009, Tabakova 2010). The web offered a tangible alternative channel of information exchange, which compensated to some extent for the loss of plurality and free speech in traditional mass media (Daskalova 2010).

In Bulgaria specialised training in journalism is available through university degree courses and shorter-term training workshops, offered by specialised NGOs, think-tanks and other organisations, with a number of journalists gaining their professional skills in practice by learning from their colleagues and personal experience (Petrova and Manliherova 2006). Issues of professionalism and ethics are addressed by specialised non-governmental associations (Daskalova 2010) but it is not clear how much they are present in editorial discussions and the decision-making of every day journalistic practice. The credibility and prestige of Bulgarian journalism are in decline (Basilie 2009) while pressure on journalists serve the political or economic interests of media owners increases (Smilova, Smilov et al. 2010).

4.5. Institutional description of BTV.

BTV was the first Bulgarian station to receive a nationwide aerial license in 1999. In spite of the fact that BTV was registered as an offshore business, during the bidding process it was presented as an investment of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

BTV's affiliation to News Corporation was not formally proven until two years later (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2007) and suspicions remained that another man was actually in charge of the station since its very start: Krassimir Guergov. Guergov is the reported owner or co-owner of a number of advertising agencies and media shops, television and radio stations, as well as the media rating and audience research company TNS. Due to his ability to influence and shift the flow of advertising incomes Guergov is portrayed as one of the most influential player on Bulgaria's media market. It has also been revealed that Guergov was a staff member of the state-security services of the former regime (COMDOS 2009). Formally announced as a consultant, Guergov was in fact instrumental in all the major decisions around the forming of BTV and had in fact submitted team members from his agencies' teams to take up top management positions at BTV (Popova 2004). It was not before the transfer of BTV's majority share from News Corporation to CME in 2010 that Guergov acknowledged publically that he owns about 6% of the channel's shares in a series of media interviews and on his personal website (Guergov 2012).

Upon its licensing in 1999, BTV's programming plan involved 10 % news, 13% – editorial and analysis, 15% - education and science, 11% children's shows and 13% of "Bulgarian programmes from non-media sources", and sports and entertainment took 38% (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2007 p.228). BTV's bid committed USD 11.5 million of investment and maintained that the station should implement a market-based business model. Within about a year the station was formally listed as a News Corporation

Subsidiary and announced that it was already making profit (Popova 2004). This was when the company took over the leadership of the market – both in terms of viewer ratings and advertising revenues.

BTV was quick to demonstrate its preference for commercially-driven programming from the start. During its first years it opted for positioning high-rated action movies and other entertainment programming in the time slots used for political talk shows and news programming slots aired by its primary competitors. The lack of culturally-challenging and new programming combined with and visible deviations from the channel's commitments to educational, social programming, Bulgarian and European production, led to public discontent. The Council for the Electronic Media, Bulgaria's regulating authority in the field, issued a recommendation in this respect (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2007). Since then BTV enjoyed an almost unchallenged supremacy on the market until 2008 when a decision was made by News Corporation to sell some of its East European subsidiaries (Tabakova 2010), marking the beginning of major changes in the ownership of the channel.

In spite of its openly commercial ethos, BTV took the lead in the television news market over its state-run competitor - BNT's Kanal 1. This was possible due to the comparatively high capital investment in technology, and the station's ability to attract a young but experienced news reporting team, the bulk of which consisted of reporters and editors who gained experience at Nova TV – Bulgaria's first private commercial channel, which had been on air in Sofia since 1994. BTV's editor-in-chief Lyuba Rizova was also one of them. Since its very start BTV was a technological pioneer – for instance in terms of employing the internet to expand its audience outreach. The channel was the first to introduce a free web-based video archive and live streaming on its website (Daskalova 2010).

BTV's appearance marked an important stage in Bulgaria's post-socialist media landscape development. It was the first station to receive a nation-wide aerial frequency licence, and challenged successfully the market and audience rating supremacy of the state-controlled Kanal 1. This was possible due to the investment made by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, which positioned Bulgaria in the context of other post-socialist countries experiencing the influx and advance of Western and American media ownership of their mass media. This advance prompted Ibroschieva and Raicheva-Stover (2007 p.234) to observe that "despite the whiff of globalisation the arrival of foreign capital in Bulgaria opened a Pandora's box of issues." Among these was the murky participation in BTV's management of local advertising and media mogul Krassimir Guergov, which cast a shade over the channel's announced intentions to play by the rules of the advertising market. The situation in which regulatory and the public discontent over BTV's failure to comply with its own programming commitments was effectively "silenced by the power of ratings" (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2007 p.234) showcased a new trend. Economic and sales and corporate profit took domination over democratic and free-market regulations, and also over social, environmental and other issues of collective interest. In these circumstances, my research fieldwork was due to begin in BTV's newsroom by the autumn of 2009.

4.6. Institutional description of Capital.

Capital is one of the titles on the Bulgarian press market that has successfully avoided most of the traps set for the post-socialist press development. *Capital* was founded as a weekly newspaper in 1993 by two young entrepreneurs and economics journalists, Ivo Prokopiev and Philip Harmandjiev. The newspaper's ownership remained in their hands over time. Foreign participation in the newspaper's ownership has been attracted at times, with the Reuters and German *Handelsblatt* obtaining shares at different periods. But by

2009 Prokopiev and Harmandjiev remained the sole proprietors of the newspaper – and of a media publishing group that had ensued around it over time. The profile they set for *Capital* from the beginning was that of a serious analytical business-oriented weekly newspaper committed to Western and Anglo-American quality journalism standards, with a special preference for the reporting style of Reuters and, to some extent, *The Financial Times* (Roudnikova 2008).

Capital was launched at the time when politically-owned press in Bulgaria had already passed its heyday and commercial privately-owned newspapers were steadily taking over the market. *Capital* was never affiliated with a political party, but unlike most other media outlets, had a distinct ideology of its own. It is outlined in a brief editorial published in the newspaper's first issue under the title "No one likes the dog that barks: the ideology of *Capital Press*.⁶" Promising to answer the two "basic questions asked of every new newspaper," the publishers of *Capital* committed to complete editorial independence ("no one tells us how to write"), and described their vision as follows:

Our political sympathies are pragmatic – [we support;] what works and makes sense. We like what we consider useful, honest, and good for the country. What is in the interest of the honest taxpayer. An inconvenient position. Someone will always label us as players of the opposite team – which is normal. No one likes the dog that bites him. We hope we shall manage to bite. (1993 p.3)

Further in their agenda-setting editorial Prokopiev, Harmandjiev and their team described their target audience as "those with specialised interest in the economy, and those without

⁶ All translations from Bulgarian by Pavel Antonov.

one” and promised to be useful, literate and understandable in their work. *Capital* has successfully maintained its commitments over the years and has avoided the ‘hybridisation’ effect, building up a solid reputation of an influential and “quality” outlet (Tabakova 2007: 317). This reputation has likely been the primary asset of *Capital*. In 2002 the publishing company established by Prokopiev and Harmandjiev to run *Capital* and its sister publications, ranked third in terms of press advertising revenues (Popova 2004). This was in spite the fact that their total numbers of readership were quite low. *Capital*’s national readership share has been estimated as 3.3%, and that of its sister daily newspaper *Dnevnik* – as 4.5%. Both titles have enjoyed high popularity online (Daskalova 2010).

In terms of editorial independence of journalists, *Capital* has also been praised. Reporters Without Borders acknowledged it as a publication whose journalists are “able to work freely and without constraint” (Basilie 2009 p.5). Journalists working for *Capital* tend to remain loyal to the newspaper, and turnover is lower. The newspaper’s founders and owners had originally participated in the editorial process, but had mostly withdrawn from daily editorial work by the time this project’s empirical phase was about to begin (Roudnikova 2008).

4.7. Description of the first newsroom placement.

In the paragraphs below I shall describe the two primary newsroom placements as I experienced them during my fieldwork, relying on existing sources and my research field notes for this purpose. The first one was BTV, where I began my fieldwork in October 2009. After a number of visits and meetings with the station’s management, I joined BTV’s news team as a participant-observant on November 17, 2009. BTV’s operations are

predominantly concentrated in the secondary compound of NDK – an imposing conference centre constructed and inaugurated as the People’s Palace of Culture back in 1981 on the occasion of then ruling Bulgarian Communist Party’s twelfth congress and the 1300th anniversary of Bulgarian statehood. Below is the description of my entry into the newsroom as recorded in my field notes, which delivers the sense of entering BTV’s newsroom as a different space – special, secured, separated from the outside world by a high non-transparent wall:

Soon I had entered the building and walked the broad marble staircase, leaving the noise and clutter of a smoky cafeteria and a few shops downstairs, up to the entrance of what used to be the lobby of Hall 7 – now split by a non-transparent wall of glass and aluminium. Behind it was the newsroom. In front – the security guards’ cabin I was expecting – I left my ID with the guard and received a BTV pass. The door buzzed and I walked in.

Field notes F0001 / 17.11.2009

A different world expects the visitor behind the guarded door. The newsroom occupies what used to be formerly the lobby in front of a concert and performance hall, extending alongside a 20 meters high panoramic window that offers an astounding view of the NDK’s main building, the green park surrounding it, and Sofia’s city centre behind. The abundance of light and space, and the impressive panoramic view outside create an immediate sense of space, calmness, but also authority and superiority – all of which I thought might have been purposefully sought by the designers of the “peoples’ palace⁷.” The distribution of seats within the newsroom space seems quite hectic and democratic at

⁷ Field notes F0001 from November 17, 2009.

first glance. But I was to realise soon that it has its own hierarchical structure, organised around access to different kinds of light, whereby the more important people in the newsroom, such as the executive producers, editors in chief, and some of the news anchors had their desks nearer to the panoramic window, and therefore enjoying more natural light, while the rest of the news team members were using relatively darker inner desks deeper inside the newsroom, and closer to another glass wall – that of the studio, where news broadcasts take place. In fact the desks – and persons using them – serve as a live background for the news programmes as they go on air and can be seen by the viewers on screen. Lyuba Rizova, the Head of News, enjoys a separate glass office, attached to the panoramic window, and her secretary sits outside the entrance and guards it from unwanted visitors⁸.

At the opposite end of the newsroom there is another entrance – also well-guarded. A long table is situated near it, surrounded by about 10 chairs. This is where editorial meetings take place, commonly referred to as *planyorka*, or a planning meeting, by everyone in the newsroom. There is usually one main *planyorka* each day, about 11 am, and sometimes one or two side meetings, usually smaller in number, designated to different news emissions, or the other side-programmes run by the news team. By the time I was entering BTV there were such side-programmes including:

- *Reporterite [The Reporters]* – a separate edition of lengthier reports, features and short documentaries, broadcast on weekends after the main news, produced by BTV staff reporter and news anchor Gena Traykova;
- *Tazi sutrin [This morning]* – a daily morning talk-show for politics, culture and entertainment, presented by journalists Nikolay Barekov and Anna Tsolova, and produced by a designated team under the overall News department supervision; and

⁸ Field notes F0001 from November 17, 2009.

Seismograph – a weekly evening political talk show, hosted by Svetla Petrova and produced by a designated team under the overall News department supervision.

I spent over 6 months as a non-paid member of BTV's news team. My position within the team was equal to that of an editorial intern. In fact there have been dozens of such interns, mostly young women aspiring for a television career, completing simpler tasks and offering assistance to staff reporters and producers. Unlike them I was able to immediately take up real reporting tasks due to the fact that I was well known to the Head of News Lyuba Rizova, her deputy, and few other senior news team members as a former colleague, and therefore my ability to produce news reports that meet the station's quality standards did not have to be proved. In fact there was an expectation, communicated at preparatory negotiations, that I would be used as an able but yet free-of-charge pair of hands. Throughout my field research tenure at BTV I produced about 10 news reports of various kind, length and subject. This gave me a precious opportunity to experience hands-on the actual conditions, requirements and procedures of news reporting at BTV, and to establish useful contacts with most members of BTV's news team, which by that time amounted to about 70 persons, including camera and video editing teams.

My position bore certain limitations though. Similar to other interns, I was not assigned a permanent desk and was asked to use desks of colleagues not present in the newsroom. This placed me sometimes in the situation of an unwanted squatter, and I could sense irritation on a number of occasions, particularly on the side of a popular evening news anchor whose desk I tended to use more frequently than others due to the fact that he would normally arrive to work rather late. Yet, with the institutional blessing of the news team, I was able to overcome tensions and in fact used such interactions to derive precious research data.

I was not that successful in terms of integrating into the non-formal dynamics of the team. The persons whom I knew from the past were mostly higher level editors and management, or news hosts. Both of these categories were somewhat excluded from the ordinary reporters' crowd for a variety of reasons. Due to the nature of my work and the needs of my research I tried to submerge myself as deep as possible into everyday news reporting dynamics – both formal and informal. For this reason I did not communicate with the newsroom 'bosses' too intensively either. At the same time I could understand that in spite of historic contacts and friendship and the management's approval for my stay in the newsroom, I was perceived as an alien and was not granted full access to all internal communications and information. As an example of these limitations, I was never assigned an office email, so I had to use my university account for work-related purposes. This deprived me of the chance to receive certain urgent announcements and exchanges that took place over the office email network, which in turn most certainly kept some aspects of editorial life undisclosed to me and my research.

4.8. Description of the second newsroom placement.

The beginning of my fieldwork in *Capital* was delayed by a couple of months because in the process of negotiations it became clear that a major change of the editorial work setup had been forthcoming. It involved a long-planned moving of the newsrooms of *Capital* and *Dnevnik* into a single shared editorial space. I had agreed with the editors that starting my research after the move would make sense. This is why it was not before March 28, 2010 that I actually walked into *Capital* as a participant-observer of the editorial process. Similar to BTV, I was going to join a team where some of the senior and experienced people knew me well as a former classmate from Sofia University's Journalism and Mass Communications Faculty, or as a former Nova TV journalist. Even though I had never

been a member of *Capital's* team in the past, I had occasionally published as a freelance author in both *Capital* and *Dnevnik*. Similar to BTV, my presence in the newsroom was expected to deliver some sort of tangible work product. This happened, admittedly to a lesser extent than in BTV – I produced and published one full-length article for the “Society” page, but it was too specific to be considered a typical *Capital*-style text. In addition, in a number of cases I submitted copy which was used – or not – by staff writers in their stories. In spite of this, I enjoyed access to the editorial processes and discussions, and spent a significant amount of time in the new shared newsroom of the two papers, which enabled me to collect substantial research data.

In neither *Capital* nor BTV did I gain access to the senior editors' meetings. Yet, on one occasion in *Capital* I was able to attend a meeting of the senior editors with one of the paper's co-founders, Philip Harmandjiev. An important observation to be mentioned is that unlike BTV, *Capital's* owners maintained a much more tangible personal presence in the on-going editorial business – to some extent due to the fact that they had founded and run it as editors though its initial periods. And while the primary shareholder by the time, Ivo Prokopiev, had mostly withdrawn from editorial participation, the Chief Editor's position was held by his wife Galya Prokopieva. Prokopieva had joined *Capital's* team from its very start and before marrying Prokopiev, and was regarded as an experienced senior colleague by the team, rather than an owner's dummy⁹. The relationship between the founding owners and the core editorial team of *Capital* was one of the most distinct features that I have come across. While I had not met the owners prior to my fieldwork, I was often exposed to evidence of sincere respect for them, and particularly for Prokopiev, by *Capital* journalists (Roudnikova 2008). This attitude, combined with the sense of

⁹ Field notes G0011 from March 30, 2010.

loyalty to the newspaper and its mission among core team members represented another distinct feature of *Capital*.

Both in BTV and *Capital* I was formally introduced at a *planyorka*, or *operativka* – operational planning meeting, as these were called in *Capital*, and distributed information sheets and consent forms to all research participants, including journalists, camera and video operators, or other persons. However, I found the editorial discussions at *Capital* much more inclusive and less hierarchical than at BTV. The setup of these discussions at *Capital* involved sitting of the entire team around a table in a designated discussion room, without any visible pre-assigned seating arrangements, with a second circle of persons standing or sometimes sitting on tables or window cases when seats were insufficient. While at BTV the senior persons, including Lyuba Rizova, would sit at one side of the table, their backs to the wall, with all others journalists crowding at the other, often forming two or three rows of chairs¹⁰. The numbers of participants in planning meetings were similar in both newsrooms, so the sitting setups can be considered as a valid evidence of differences in the working and communication culture between BTV and *Capital*, with the latter's meetings seemingly less hierarchical and more participatory than the former's.

Let me briefly describe the shared newsroom of *Capital* and *Dnevnik*. It was situated on the second floor of an office building dating from the late 1970s. The news team had moved there from their previous headquarters, just a few houses down Ivan Vazov Street in Sofia's city centre. Entry to the building required an electronic token, which every staff member could carry along and use for direct access to the building. An elderly security guard would usually occupy a tiny glass cabin next to the gate, but communication with him was very scarce, as I obtained the electronic token instantly. The newsroom was

¹⁰ Field Notes F0020 from November 18, 2009.

located on the third floor. It actually occupied the entire floor and was quite spacious, as it was surrounded by normal size windows from three sides. There was an open reception near the entrance, and a set of chairs and a table for visitors. Several award certificates and other trophies received by *Capital* and its team members over the decades were displayed above it. This became my working desk for the period of my stay in *Capital*, as here I was not assigned a desk either. The space was quite crowded with desks, and would actually get crowded on issue-closing Thursday night and Friday morning. As a weekly, *Capital* would go to the printer on Friday afternoon, and be distributed later in the night and on the following morning, which made it a Saturday weekly paper in effect. Back to the newsroom: it featured two separated glass rooms on the right and left far side corners of the hall, occupied by the chief editors of *Capital* and *Dnevnik*. Just behind the reception was the entrance to the editorial discussions room, mentioned already, while on the opposite side of the hall there was a separate small kitchen, where everyone could walk in, make tea or coffee, store food, eat around a kitchen table, and – according to expectation - wash their own cutlery and cups.

4.9. Involvement with environmental and climate-change movements in Bulgaria.

Upon arriving in Bulgaria for field research I intended to rely upon contacts and information that I had been building with environmental activists in the country since 1993. This was when as a first-year journalism student at the Sofia University I was first involved with environmental activities and became the co-founder of Eco-club 2000, an environmental group founded by prominent activist and wind-surfing trainer Dimitur Vassilev. As part of this group I was introduced to the community of the most active nature-protection activists in Bulgaria, working in a broad range of issues from wildlife conservation, industrial pollution, GMOs, nuclear and renewable energy and waste. I was

actively involved in communication and media-related activities of this community as a journalist in Nova, Bulgaria's first commercial channel with areal broadcasting licence for the Sofia region since 1994. After taking a degree in Environmental Sciences and Policy at the Budapest-based Central European University in 1998, I returned to Bulgaria to become a co-founder of BlueLink.net – an internet-based network offering communication and information assistance to the same active environmentalist community. A major share of civil society dynamics and activities regarding nature protection in Bulgaria over the following decade have emerged or been closely linked to this community. As an individual founder and board member of BlueLink.net I have been involved with and informed about most of these developments. This involvement and information has been a major driver for my professional interest in the environment and civil society developments in CEE, and – consecutively – for my research interest that has brought me to implementing this research.

Nature protection in Bulgaria had followed an uneven path of development over the post-socialist period, closely related to the troublesome process of developing democracy in the country (O'Brien 2009). The conceptual interest of this research project in the relationship between journalism and what Couldry (2010) terms 'voice' has suggested focusing on the way journalists engage with issues of collective social importance, requiring a systematic change and rethinking of the dominant neoliberal social discourse. Environmental protection and climate change have been identified as such issues, suggesting environmental groups and activists as possible protagonists for such engagement. This is why I have kept them in mind as a secondary target group, while defining the scope of research participants for the empirical phase.

A milestone event that I expected to generate opportunities for the sort of engagement my research is interested in was the then forthcoming UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen. Known as the Climate Summit in Copenhagen, the event scheduled for December 2009

was expected to become the arena of high-level political, policy and scientific debate over systematic paradigms of production and consumption, and attracted immense media interest across the world (Painter 2010). The Climate Change Coalition, established in 2005, was the most prominent civil society actor in Bulgaria dealing with climate change in the onset of Copenhagen. BlueLink.net was a coalition member and maintained the coalition's website.

Perceived as an issue of global importance without immediate relevance for Bulgaria, climate change was receiving less prominence in Bulgaria than other environmental issues. Among them one had received excessive visibility and triggered large scale social involvement and media coverage: the indiscriminate development and construction in protected natural areas along the Black Sea coastline and in the high mountains of Bulgaria. In the peak of the property boom of the mid 2000s, Bulgaria saw an excessive rise of vacation and tourism-related investment. A number of high-profile cases of blatant violation of the country's nature protection legislation, given a blind eye by the state authorities and the justice, raised public discontent and accusations in corruption and nepotism against the government. Two consecutive decisions by the Supreme Administrative Court in favour of investors who had requested the termination of protected area status in order to build vacation properties unlocked a wave of street protest in Sofia and other cities over 2005 – 2006. The Parliament bowed to public pressure and passed new legislation, making it impossible for the courts to retrospectively evoke the status of protected areas. Investor-driven counter-protests evoked, and tensions persisted and accelerated by then of 2009 when my field research work in Bulgarian newsrooms was bound to begin.

In addition to exposure and contacts with the environmental movement, I used various opportunities to remain informed about and involved with the analyses and effort of

international organisations to secure informed and active coverage of climate change and related policy discussions in Copenhagen. For this purpose I participated in an international conference for journalists and media scholars in Lisbon entitled “The Media and the Environment: Between complexity and urgency” convened by the European Environmental Agency in April 2009, and joined an international blogging initiative on climate change by the European Journalism Centre in Maastricht.

4.10. BezDim – a smoke-free campaign as a data collection ground.

In the middle of my field research term I encountered a valuable opportunity to study journalists’ responses to citizens’ participation in governmental decision-making on issues of collective importance. It has arrived to me in the form of a grassroots civic initiative in favour of a complete ban on tobacco smoking in Bulgaria. On February 19, 2010 I joined a spontaneous demonstration in front of Bulgaria’s parliament against the intentions of some members of Parliament (MPs) to cancel an existing smoking ban due to come in force some three months later. In fact I helped a group of demonstrators to organise overnight with the help of Facebook and other internet communication channels. This, and the fact that I fully shared their frustration with the intended legislative reversal of the ban, produced an anti-tobacco activist out of me overnight. As the campaign in favour of the ban unfolded quickly over the following days and weeks I had to make an urgent decision as to whether to integrate it into my on-going research.

To make this decision I needed to establish whether the case fits the analytical framework and research method of this research. In spite of not being directly linked to nature protection, the pollution from tobacco smoking is listed among primary environmental health risks by the World Health Organisation (WHO 2009). Tobacco smoking appears related to climate change in terms of political economy (Oreskes and Conway 2010).

International and national policy processes around climate change appear to be facing similar challenges, linked to the influence of industrial lobbies, the actions of political, official and civil society actors, and – ultimately - mass media's role in obscuring scientific consensus about the threats that it poses on public interest. The case of emerging civic initiative defending collective interest around tobacco smoking involved a display of journalistic practices and professional norms in action. Including the case in the field research venues was a good fit to the chosen methodology: my involvement with the civic initiative, which was soon to be known as *Bulgaria Bez Dim* [Smoke-free Bulgaria], offered a unique possibility for me to work with journalists and observe closely their individual and professional activities, decisions and judgments. All these factors suggested that the case could serve as a source of data that could contribute to this project's research goals. So I decided to accommodate it into my research project's agenda. For the purpose of this thesis from this point on I will be referring to the Smoke-free Bulgaria group and its campaigning activities as BezDim – the transliterated version of the name that the activists adopted themselves.

Following this decision I became involved with the planning and implementation of a full scale public advocacy and media campaign, aiming to earn favourable media coverage for the complete smoking ban, defeat the arguments of its opponents, and apply pressure on the government to maintain the ban. The activities undertaken by the BezDim group that I was a part of have included: formulating messages to the public, mass media and political decision makers; designing channels and methods for their successful communication; organising media events and participation in media programmes and interviews.

I have had to handle with utmost care a triple identity – of a journalist, a campaigner, and a researcher. For this purpose I persistently scrutinized my own level of involvement in order to minimize the risks of influencing the field that I am aiming to research. At the same

time, open access to both the camps of journalists, and campaigners has provided me with a precious possibility to observe and be part of interactions – formal and informal – between journalists and the collective social movement around tobacco smoking. These included joint planning and events’ coordination, reporting, interviewing, and other professional practices, as well as chatting over coffee, dinner and over the internet. Observing the boundaries between professional and personal engagement to a collective cause, and studying the ways in which journalists define them, has emerged as a key theme of my research. Journalists’ professional engagement with editors, colleagues, administrators, human resource and sales executives, as well as media owners and management, was observed primarily in the newsroom environment. Interaction with protesters, politicians, press officers, experts and other stakeholders to the collective issues of tobacco smoking, took place mainly in public venues, the parliament, streets and squares where civic activities have happened. Finally, personal encounters of journalists with their friends and colleagues have been useful for observing the boundaries of professionalism as perceived and defined by journalists themselves. I have added a separate chapter to the structure of this thesis about the findings, generated through my involvement with the BezDim initiative, where I am reporting in greater detail on my involvement with it, and outlining the primary changes, observations and findings of my research project, related to it.

4.11. Chapter conclusions.

In this chapter I have demonstrated the planning and implementation of fieldwork and data collection that were undertaken in response to the theoretical challenges outlined earlier. I summarized the preliminary arrangements made, including contacts with newsrooms and editorial decision makers, and other activities undertaken for building trust and negotiating

access, that have successfully prepared the stage for gathering empirical data in two selected newsrooms: of BTV and *Capital* weekly newspaper. Special attention was paid to ethical considerations and the way in which they have been handled in practice, including anonymising research participants, data security, confidentiality, and avoiding any risk for participants.

The chapter renders a broad picture of Bulgaria's post-socialist media landscape to determine the balance between democratic and social commitments of journalism on one side, and the economic and financial priorities related to a dominant neoliberal discourse on the other. I have questioned the 'transitologist' view that a unilateral process of moving from one pole – that of ideologically-controlled journalism – to another, where liberal journalism and a free media market prevail. Tracing the major milestones along the development of post-socialist Bulgarian journalism I suggest that they have followed an uneven route, linked to the twists and loops of Bulgaria's emerging democracy, and that neither a free media market, nor independent and quality journalism had been available in the country by the autumn of 2009 when my fieldwork was about to begin. Quite on the contrary, the media landscape was dominated by non-transparent commercial, economic and political interests in mass media ownership (Lozanov 2011, Štětka 2011), a dysfunctional advertising market (Popova 2004), and declining freedom of journalism (Basille 2009).

While public media were subject to regular control by ruling politicians and their de-facto monopoly over nation-wide television and radio frequencies and the advertising market was maintained until about the end of the 1990s, private ownership also failed to deliver the much-desired democratisation and pluralism in the journalistic field. In this context, I described BTV and *Capital* as two leading privately owned media organisations. BTV was launched in 2000 with an ambitious commercially-driven programming plan, but failed to

keep up to its own commitments for pluralistic and diverse content. *Capital*, in contrast, has remained loyal to its founders' credo of quality and independent journalism. While BTV's ownership was in the hands of US-based News Corporation of Rupert Murdoch, with the unclear but evident participation of local advertising strongman Krassimir Guergov, *Capital* had been created and run as a newspaper by two businessmen-turned economic journalists: Ivo Prokopiev and Phillip Harmandjiev. Both outlets took leadership in the market within their segment – national television and quality press.

The setup of both newsroom research placements, as well as a brief description of my positioning as a participant-observer in the newsroom structures and among fellow journalists, has revealed certain limitations in my access to editorial processes. Nevertheless I have worked in conditions that have allowed me to collect sufficient research data for the purpose of applying the project's theoretical network. This has been possible not only in the two newsroom placements, but also in the reporting field. My data collection has been helped by my participation and involvement with social groups and movements dealing with issues of collective social interest, such as climate, environmental change and tobacco smoking. Setting the ground for the reporting of data and analysis of journalists' engagements with these issues both professionally and personally, I have described my past and present involvement with the environmental and climate-change movements in Bulgaria, and the way it was intended to help my research. Although my engagement in it was unplanned *BezDim* – a civil initiative against tobacco smoking - has also served to generate data collection for the purposes of this research. Following the description of the empirical data collection implementation in Bulgaria, the chapter prepares the ground for the analysis of data in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reporting findings: Business influence over professional journalistic practice in Bulgaria

5.1. Introduction: the purpose and structure of this chapter.

In this chapter I shall begin reporting and analysing the results from my fieldwork in Bulgarian newsrooms from 2009 – 2010, linking them to the theoretical framework of this thesis. The chapter presents aspects of Bulgaria's contemporary journalistic practice that I have observed and documented during participant observation and semi-structured interviews with journalists. It presents the picture of post-socialist professional journalism, as drawn by the participants in this research, scanning it for signs of advancing market values and business interests of mass media owners. Participants' attitudes to journalism are analysed in seven categories distilled from the available data: likes, dislikes, freedom, limitations, power, 'honesty', and no idea or attitude with regard to journalism. The chapter discusses the features of journalism that journalists like and dislike, which aspects make them proud or passionate, and which ones disappoint and discourage them. It then analyses the specifics of categories of attitudes that have emerged from this research like: freedom and limitations, power, and 'honest journalism'. The chapter reports on the links that participants make between their profession and social change, democracy, and the social responsibilities of journalism, which will be further discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, as well as the definitions of loss of creative freedom discussed in Chapter 8.

Three normative orders of journalism suggested by W.L. Bennett (1996) are observable in Bulgaria's contemporary journalistic practice: professional, societal and business-related. Tensions among these orders are clearly visible when journalists deal with issues of collective and social importance. Taking a close look at the way in which norms like objectivity, neutrality or balance, publishing formats or the so-called 'wall' between editorial and advertising are interpreted and applied reveals new dimensions of the relationships between editorial and media owners' interests. One purpose of this chapter is to establish the extent to which occupational and employment practices, as well as journalistic practices and editorial processes, including beats, formats, and reporting techniques are subject to market and business influence and neoliberalisation.

While further chapters will specifically look at collective issues of environment and climate change, as well as public participation over tobacco control, I shall seek in this chapter to examine journalists' perception of their professional responsibilities to collective and social interests, public participation and democracy. In an attempt to deconstruct participants' understanding of journalism I shall report on their engagement with various sources and types of journalistic education: academic and professional. The chapter's findings will be summarized in the conclusions section.

5.2. Reasons to like journalism: Defining professional journalism in six categories.

Throughout my empirical research in Bulgaria I have made every effort to extract journalists' own perceptions of the professional values that underpin their profession. One good reason to do so is to determine the impact of professionalization as a discourse constructed and utilized by managers in news organizations, by journalists themselves, and by the public (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p. 549) and its possible linkages to neoliberalism

on Bulgarian soil. Taking Bourdieu's (1998a) definition for guidance, I searched journalists' accounts for traces of neoliberalisation of Bulgaria's post-socialist journalistic field.

Probing journalists' understandings of their own profession was among the primary directions of my research work. The meaning of professionalism in journalism was probed systematically with all research participants and in the majority of my field notes. With the help of quality data analysis software NVivo I marked 117 references to professionalism across 17 in-depth interviews to what I designated as the general category of journalists' 'professional self.' During the analysis phase I grouped these references into seven subcategories based on various research participants' attitudes to journalism. Each of these categories is multifaceted and consists of diverse and sometimes opposing perceptions and attitudes. The categories overlap in many references, and sometimes opposing attitudes or definitions co-exist within one and the same interview or case description.

They are:

- **liking** – a category of references which includes pride, affection, and all other positive attitudes to journalism;
- **dislike** – the reverse category, gathering participants' negative references of journalism;
- **freedom** – a category which contains all references to freedom in the context of participants' attitudes to journalism;
- **limits** – a category of references whereby participants refer to various kinds of limitations and control of journalism;
- **power** – a category that emerged in the course of analysing and coding data, which compiles participants' mentions of power in relation to journalism, both in terms of the inherent powers of journalism and access to external sources of political, economic and other power;

- **honest journalism** – a category suggested by participants' accounts, linking morality to professionalism and democratic responsibilities of journalists; and
- **no idea** – all references revealing lack of knowledge or attitude to journalism were grouped under this category.

A high number of interviewed research participants expressed positive attitudes to journalism, making 'like' the overwhelming category of perceptions and attitudes to journalism. Positive attitudes appear in 55 references across 16 semi-structured interviews and were detected in a number of situations described in field notes. But positive attitudes to journalism are very individual and vary significantly. I tried to specifically explore those moments, episodes and experiences in participants' personal accounts and life stories that made them feel proud and satisfied with journalism and their personal involvement with it.

Appreciation expressed by one's friends and closest social environment, or by other groups or individuals, whose lives have been positively affected was often cited by journalists as a motivating factor.¹¹ While appreciation by the audience expressed on the Internet or in person is important,¹² participants also spoke of another kind of appreciation or the lack of it: that by colleagues and fellow journalists:

Recognition by ordinary people is one thing, but recognition by colleagues – by those who understand the essence of your work, [is most valuable]. If they assess you well it matters, because we [- journalists -] are in competition with one another at the same time.

Interview A0088-0089 from December 12, 2009

¹¹ Interview A0086 from December 9, 2009.

¹² Interview A0087 from December 10, 2009.

Other research participants demonstrated pride with their own accomplishments in the field of journalism¹³. One of *Capital's* co-founders and owners did not hide the great deal of personal satisfaction with the quality and reputation of the newspaper, and with the fact that it turned out as a successful journalistic and business project against all odds¹⁴. Exposure to and fascination with journalism often begins in childhood. Some participants had early journalistic experiences, or took up journalism classes during secondary school¹⁵. Here is how a former news reporter, currently the chief editor of *Capital's* sister publication *Dnevnik*, recollected the moment when she first knew that she wanted to be a journalist:

For some reason when I was a child I already wanted to become a journalist. I have even preserved a 'microphone' I made from a bunch of pens and play dough... Back then I liked asking questions to friends I was playing with, or to my parents and their guests...

Interview A0122-123 from August 19, 2010

On a number of occasions participants' decisions to pursue studies and careers in journalism were influenced by their parents who were also journalists. In such cases not all participants recall being encouraged by their journalist parents to follow their professional path. On the contrary, two participants recalled being warned by their journalist parents against choosing journalism as a profession.¹⁶ Participants' own explanations of their parents' advice pointed to the unfavourable conditions for practising independent

¹³ Among others, interviews: C0109 from May 5, 2010; E0104 from May 1, 2010; and C0110-0112, from May 3, 2010.

¹⁴ Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010.

¹⁵ Interviews: C0109 from May 3, 2010; A0122-123 from August 19, 2010; and A0090, from January 3, 2010.

¹⁶ Interviews: E0105 from May 1, 2010; and C0107-0108 from May 3, 2010.

journalism during the period of state socialism when their parents were professionally active. An informative personal account in this respect was offered by Nicola, a senior editor at *Capital*:

The times of my parents were different, but the sad thing is that the conclusions were the same. When I had to decide what to study back in 1991-3, they still had their totalitarian idea of journalism, which entailed practically not having the freedom to write about the things they wanted. (...) My parents' main argument was that this was an ungrateful profession for an honest person with [moral] principles that they hoped their son was going to be...

Interview C0107-0108 from May 3, 2010

This account suggests that the limitations and pressures on journalism today are comparable to the ones experienced by journalists during socialist times. It also introduces personal morals and honesty as a determinant of proper journalism – an issue that I shall return to.

5.3. Power and change.

Access to and contact with persons who hold political or economic power has been part of journalists' job now and in the past. Back in the late 1980s and the early 1990s journalism in Bulgaria was authoritative, manipulative, heavily indoctrinated and politicized, and dominated by political powers of the day. And yet it is precisely this type of journalism that has attracted and inspired most of today's active mid-career journalists, who

experienced state socialism and the years of political change as children or youngsters.¹⁷ Access to power, with all the perceived and real privileges that it brings, attracted some of today's active journalists and editorial decision makers to this job.¹⁸ Although no direct references were made by participants to cases of journalists taking personal benefit from their relations with persons of power, it seemed that such relations are not only acceptable but in fact expected. The existence of such relations was confirmed by a journalist who described how she influenced members of Parliament (MPs) and other political decision-makers to accomplish what she thought was a noble cause: improving Bulgaria's citizenship laws:

You can change many things. Not only laws and so on. You only need desire and stubbornness. Because by only showing that a certain law is dull you change nothing. You need to go ten times to these Members of Parliament who can propose the changes, as it happens with the changes in the Bulgarian citizenship law - they all started from [my] report.

Interview A0096-0097-0098 from April 14, 2010

First the participant, a BTV news-team member at the time, had produced a news report on the plight of a young girl who had been unable to get Bulgarian citizenship in spite of covering all requirements for that. Further, the journalist acted in a way that went beyond the scope of news reporting in order to help the girl. Help eventually involved applying pressure on MPs and other politicians to amend citizenship laws. While the participant did not take personal benefit from her actions, her account reveals the mechanism which

¹⁷ Interview A0122-123, from August 19, 2010.

¹⁸ Interview C110-112 from May 5, 2010.

allows Bulgarian journalists to use their personal access to decision-makers for different purposes:

[...] I won't even tell how many times I went to [the Minister for the Bulgarians abroad] Bojidar Dimitrov. You simply need to [be] there to step on their toes because they do not work. [...] You motivate [decision-makers] one way or another. Not only by interviewing them. After the interview you need to keep following the problem you picked up until it changes in the way you think is just.

Interview A0096-0097-0098 from April 14, 2010

This episode demonstrates that a perception of power to effect change in the life of others appears to be an important source of positive motivation for journalists. Such power is generated both by journalists' ability to put pressure on decision-makers both by means of their publications, and directly. Indeed, research participants listed different facets of their aspired journalistic power to change, including: the possibility of changing people's mind and making them "think about [the important] things"¹⁹ or identifying a solution to a pressing issue that affects many.²⁰

Dnevnik's Dora provided an example of journalists' potential to initiate change, and to receive appreciation and gratitude from people whose lives changed as a result. She pointed to a personal experience article by fellow journalist Elenko Elenkov (2010) that revealed cumbersome procedures, red-tape and nepotism in Bulgarian customs. The article became immensely popular online. It called upon Bulgaria's finance minister to step in and

¹⁹ Interview A0086 from December 12, 2009.

²⁰ Interview A0088-89 from December 10, 2009.

amend the procedures that affect everyone receiving goods by international mail – which he swiftly did:

The shop tender said: “So, you are Elenko Elenkov, from *Dnevnik*?” We all froze. The guy wanted to shake Elenko's hand, thanked him for the article. He was very impressed by us, gave us a discount. He was a Bulgarian just returned from abroad, dealing in imported goods from E-bay, so customs [procedures] were a huge problem for him. So he saw the problem described in our paper, he saw that there was pressure to resolve it.[...] That's when you see the benefit from this kind of journalism. This is not the same as uncovering some political swindles or corruption, but it is something useful and practical.

Interview 122-23 from August 19, 2010

Frustration from the sense that one's journalistic work leads to no change appears as one of the most discouraging experiences of participants. A participant defines the demoralizing effect of the lack of follow-up from her work as follows:

I remember thinking that whatever one writes: finding sources, disclosing contracts, uncovering wrongdoings of the management, you just get threats, curses, but they do not care and nothing changes. (...) So I think to myself: if whatever I do causes no change what is the point of going on? One gets tired at some point, and either has to change one's beat [or leave].

Interview A0122-0123 from August 19, 2010

These and other research participants' accounts demonstrate that a distinct relationship between journalistic professionalism and the ability to change the life of others exists. Based upon this observation and in line with the theoretical framework of this thesis I will explore further journalists' attitudes to change: more specifically, I shall look closely into their involvements with social change and issues of collective interest, such as environmental and climate change (Chapter 6) and tobacco smoking (Chapter 7). What remains to be considered is the extent to which journalists are free and able to act upon their willingness to bring positive change.

5.4 Freedom.

Certain aspects of power as a category defining journalism relate it to two other categories that originate from my data analysis: freedom and limitations. Both of them enjoy a rich variety of interpretations in participants' minds. One example of how they understand 'freedom' is their fascination with a journalists' perceived freedom to travel, both domestically and abroad. Travel abroad, particularly to Western countries, was a privilege of the powerful, denied to the majority of Bulgaria's population during the state socialism period. To many youngsters of that time, who form today's dominant age group in Bulgaria's newsrooms, the job of a journalist has been particularly appealing because of its association with the freedom to travel.²¹ Other privileges of journalists during state socialism that also seemed tempting included direct access to persons of power and higher social status and living standard.

²¹ Interview A0122-123 from August 19, 2010.

But desire for privileges was not the only drive for today's Bulgarian journalists to choose their profession. Asking questions, being curious to know and reveal facts and information come in as other types of freedom that many young people aspired to in the last decades of socialism. It is a major source of fascination with journalism for my research participants today, connecting again the 'like' and 'freedom' aspects of journalism, and offering yet another proof that today's post-socialist journalism might have more similarities to state socialist era journalism than one might expect. An experienced journalist, editor-in-chief and opinion leader within *Capital's* news desk described her first moment of attraction to journalism in the following words:

I can't recall. It was not the glory for sure. I wanted to write even back then, and I wanted to ask questions.

Interview C109 from May 5, 2010

The liking of journalism as a profession started quite early for some. Research participants' recollections of their journalist parents' professional experiences during socialism suggest important parallels between the state of journalistic independence some 30 years ago and at the time of this research. They demonstrate that one's ability to retain a clean professional conscience is essential for the personal satisfaction of journalists with their jobs. The concept of professional and creative freedom appeared to be central in this respect. Fifteen journalists spoke of freedom – editorial, professional, personal and other – as part of their perception of their job. To some it was the freedom to ask questions – one of the basics of journalism that attracted them to it.²² Others thought of editorial freedom in terms of a journalist's ability to decide on the topics, subjects, and problems that get covered; and the sources that they use. Some saw professional freedom as an essential necessity for a journalist. As one participant put it passionately:

²² Interview C0109 from May 3, 2010.

(Question: Have you encountered limitations in your work?)

No. Absolutely not. And thank God! Imagine the kind of person one has to be if one encounters such limitations and remains in the profession. How can one keep the faith in what one is doing?

Interview E0104 from May 1, 2010

The understanding of ‘freedom’ was often linked by journalists to journalistic norms. The association of freedom with independence and the quality of journalism is very typical for the journalists working for *Dnevnik* and *Capital*.²³ Several of BTV’s news team members also declared that they were never limited in any possible ways in their work²⁴, but others mentioned past incidents in which the channel was accused of limiting freedom of speech.²⁵ The perception of ‘freedom’ in relation to editorial norms appears clearly in the description of a young reporter’s formative experience in the team of a popular TV host Milen Tsvetkov, at another national terrestrial broadcast channel, Nova. In what was meant by the interviewee as a very positive appraisal of Tsvetkov’s style as editorial decision-maker and mentor, the participant described him as follows:

[Tsvetkov's] only ideology is that we do things the way we feel about them. (...) There are no taboos. It is dull to follow models and rules, he thinks. (...) He is not your standard obtuse journalist, following rules and textbooks, [always knowing] how things need to be done. There is no such

²³ Interviews: A0115-0116 from May 5, 2010; A0122-0123 from August 19, 2012; C0107-0108 from May 3, 2010; C0109 from May 3, 2010; and A0099 from April 16, 2012.

²⁴ Interviews E00104 and E0105 from May 1, 2010, among others.

²⁵ Interview C0110-0111-0112 from May 3, 2010.

thing. There were open discussions there.

Interview A0096-0097-0098, from April 16, 2010

But editorial freedom was not an absolute value in everyone's mind. An award-winning reporter and author of investigative documentaries justified the loss of complete editorial freedom and the need to comply with editorial norms: "thanks to [these] there has not been a weak spot in my reports," she explained²⁶. This opinion suggested that complete and unobstructed editorial freedom, lack of editorial guidance, norms and limitations are problematic in some way. Submerged into an editorial environment where no norms apply strictly, young journalists may celebrate what they perceive as full editorial and creative freedom, but will be vulnerable and easy to manipulate in the absence of professional norms to refer to while making professional decisions.

5.5. Norms in practice.

Bennett (1996 p.375) defines three not-always-compatible 'normative orders' that rationalize journalistic processes: professional; political; and economic ones. In line with this classification, journalistic norms like objectivity, balance, fairness, and cross-checking sources belong to the first normative order. The second order regulates the role of the press in politics and society in line with the Fourth Estate theory, including journalists' role in promoting under-represented groups, equal participation in decision making, political accountability, and informing citizens of their elected officials' behaviour, and so on. So this order of norms defines the mission of journalism in society, and legitimizes a journalist as a socially responsible actor. It is in relation to this role that journalists' engagement with collectively-relevant issues of environmental and climate change, as well

²⁶ Interview A0087 from December 10, 2009.

as tobacco smoking, were analysed. The third order deals with the business side of mass media operations: these are the norms which define the place and role of a journalist as part of the political economy mechanism of mass media, including the ones that dictate that a journalist should serve the media owners' economic, political, class or personal interests. Bennett's classification has been helpful in the design of my theoretical approach and research method, described already in chapters 2 and 3, and is also instrumental for the purpose of data analysis.

Exploring and collecting evidence of the way in which the three normative orders of journalism interact in the post-socialist Bulgarian reality was among the primary purposes of my fieldwork. More specifically, I looked at the ways in which journalists perceive and interpret professional norms, adhere to them in their work (or not), and apply them in practice. This was dictated by the theoretical framework of this research, which required me to probe whether journalists enable dialogue and 'voice:' how they encourage pluralism and public participation in political decision-making over issues of collective social relevance, and how they balance these with the economic interests of media owners. Tensions between the three normative orders of journalism have been known to appear around issues of collective importance like environmental and climate change (Hansen 1993, Boykoff and Boykoff 2004, Carvalho and Burgess 2005, Smith 2005). This is why as part of my field research I closely watched journalists' engagement with these issues and harvested data that document the normative tensions in practice in the form of field notes, interviews and published material.

Tensions among normative orders of journalism were already identified and documented in journalistic coverage of climate change science (Boykoff and Boykoff 2004, 2007). Professional norms like balance, novelty and dramatisation applied by the U.S. quality press have been found to effectively conceal from the public scientific consensus over the

anthropological nature of climate change. Guided by these findings, I carefully examined the practical application in Bulgaria of first-order professional norms. While the specifics of journalists' engagement with environmental and climate change issue will be dealt with separately in Chapter 6, below I offer some of the findings related to the tensions among professional, societal and business norms, as they transpired in my research data.

Norms such as balance, neutrality or objectivity were a reasonable starting point for my exploration because of their decisive importance in terms of the way in which journalists define what professional behaviour is acceptable and what is not when issues of collective importance are concerned. Participants were far from any sort of shared understanding of how any of these norms should work in practice. At least two senior journalists directly argued against the possibility of complete objectivity or neutrality in journalistic work²⁷ while others have described them among the key professional qualities of a journalist.²⁸ The case study of the debate around the tobacco smoking ban in Bulgaria, analysed in Chapter 7, revealed contrasting attitudes. In the name of professionalism some participants acted strictly neutrally and produced balanced coverage, while others overlooked neutrality, objectivity and balance entirely. An impressive demonstration of the collision between the perception that a journalist should be neutral and the urge to follow one's preferences, including smoking habits, was delivered when a reporter attempted to prevent a banned protest action by anti-smoking activists in Parliament by tipping off the Parliament security force. The rest of the journalists spontaneously condemned her action, accusing her of compromising journalists' neutrality.²⁹

Objectivity imposes on journalists an expectation of "moral and emotional detachment from topics and subjects of news" (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p.559). While many

²⁷ Interviews C0107-0108 from May 3, 2010 and A0124-0125 from August 20, 2010.

²⁸ Interview A0096-0097-0098 from April 13, 2010

²⁹ Field notes F061 from April 15, 2010

journalists in Bulgaria consider neutrality in the reporting field an essential mark of professionalism, there is a greater divergence of opinions regarding the importance of balance and objectivity of journalists' published work. An experienced journalist at *Capital* stated that "journalism cannot be impartial, so in that sense it cannot be objective, pure ..."³⁰ She went on to describe her own understanding of her job as follows:

My job as a journalist is to absolutely objectively do the technical work 'by the textbook': collect the facts, check everything, in the most meticulous and precise way.

Interview A0124 - 0123 from August 20, 2010

While in this case the reference to a journalistic 'textbook' is rather metaphorical, it suggests a distinct line of differentiation between objectivity and impartiality. The view that a journalist's published work could and should carry and deliver a personal viewpoint of its author and does not need to necessarily be balanced seems to enjoy popularity among research participants. It was defended by participants in both BTV and *Capital* but was perceived more like a conscious editorial policy in the latter. *Capital's* news desk once assigned me to produce a first-hand personal account of an active citizen initiating a protest action – in this case the one in favour of a complete ban on tobacco smoking in public. Here is how the paper's chief editor justified her approval of what seemed to some editorial team members as one-sided advocacy rather than proper journalism, in comparison with a more balanced fact reporting approach as the one taken by a news agency like *Reuters*:

It's alright, it presents a thesis. I deliberately aim at this - many of our texts present a thesis. The big difference between

³⁰ Interview A0124-0125 from August 20, 2010

Capital and *Reuters* is that *Reuters*' entire standard is meant for news reporting: all they do revolves around the facts, the viewpoints, quotes from different sources. We follow this fundamental rule with respect to the information we present, but from that point onward we have no problem coming up with a thesis that we defend.

Interview C0109 from May 3, 2010

I came across evidence of the effects of novelty norms and television timing formats on journalistic quality and depth of materials. Two incidents are worth mentioning in this respect. The first one involved my work as a participant-observer member of BTV's news team. As part of my strategy to try the news team's reflexes on non-mainstream topics that require a more systematic investigation, I had suggested investigating why public transportation vehicles in the city of Sofia did not seem to be clean enough. Here is a quotation from my field notes from the assigning of the story:

The initial reaction I received by [the executive editor] was quite sceptical: "Is this news, you think?" Well, news or not, it strikes the eye, I responded. We both knew this was a story of endemic corruption, lack of proper rules and proper enforcement, and the need to change all that: mission impossible to many. I believe I only got the story assigned due to her curiosity and respect for my years of experience: "Will you do it by 3 pm?" she snapped. I had about 5 hours [to do it].

Field notes F0045-0046 from January 9 – 10, 2010

Further in my field notes I described my experience of trying to investigate policy and legal documents, identifying suitable spokespersons, arranging camera crew visits, making it almost impossible to properly investigate and present the reasons for the neglect and nepotism that result in the lower hygiene of public transport vehicles, suggest who is responsible and what needs to be done, and fit all that into the 50 seconds slot that was assigned to me in the evening news. Luckily the story was moved to the following day eventually. But even this extra time seemed insufficient for a proper analytical investigation of the systemic causes of this trivial problem. Accomplishing all of the above in high quality and depth was close to impossible. And while television technology offers a more or less convincing excuse for compromising on depth and quality for the sake of time, one would expect that a weekly newspaper like *Capital* would offer much more accommodating timing for quality journalism. However, in an illustration of Bourdieu's (1998a) argument about television's dominance over journalism under market pressure, I encountered a similar situation in the newspapers' newsroom as well: time pressure and work overload prevent journalists from in-depth investigation. Moreover, lack of depth seems to be adopted as an acceptable professional standard imposed by timing and space limitations in the press:

I have a problem with reaching excessive depth, digging too deep... I don't have such motivation. (...) I go as far as I can by 2 p.m. Thursday. That is the deadline. Of course, with time one develops skills, speed, one can very quickly distinguish true from false, appropriate from inappropriate interviewees, etc., that's where experience helps a lot.

Interview A0124-0125 from August 8, 2010

Thematic specialisation of news reporters, known as the 'beats' system, was also mentioned as an example of an obstacle that prevents the holistic perception and investigation of problems. Sharing her reflections on the successful impact of Elenkov's (2010) personal experience article mentioned earlier, *Dnevnik's* chief editor has criticised beats as a limiting factor, speculating that personal interest and involvement with an issue might be appropriate for a journalist:

I often tell myself I should make everyone go out of the newsroom, go anywhere they like and come back with a story from the street... When I see the people sitting behind their computers, talking to people, working on their beats, I get the feeling that we lose the perception of what is really happening outside.³¹

Interview A122-23, from August 19, 2010

Bulgaria's post-socialist journalists perceived norms and professional standards as instruments of control – both by superiors, and self-imposed, matching the description of Aldridge and Evetts (2003 p. 556). While many participants positively associated journalism with freedom, naturally limitations and control attracted mostly negative attitudes. Fifty-one references across fifteen interviews touched upon limitations and control. Participants spoke of their negative experiences with various avenues of pressure and control that deprived them of their professional freedom. There appear to be two types of pressure and control that participants experienced: external, coming from forces outside of their newsroom, and internal – acting within the editorial team of the respective mass media organisation. While first order professional norms like the ones discussed above seemed to effectively apply internally – within the professional realm, journalists' accounts

³¹ Interview A0122-0123, on August 19, 2010.

also pointed at external pressure factors from outside the newsroom that seemed related to the business and societal normative orders of their profession.

The urge to accomplish independence – or ‘freedom’ as it is often referred to across my research data – was used by some participants to justify the awareness of journalists of the financial and market affairs of their employer. *Capital’s* owners, editors, and many journalists seemed particularly concerned about the financial viability of their newspaper and were willing to acknowledge their awareness of it, in spite of the risk that it might jeopardise the separation between editorial and sales³². This points to the need to consider the media owners’ interference with editorial processes.

5.6 Advertising and owners’ interests in the newsroom and beyond.

It was suggested by research participants that the other business interests of a media owner (that is, beyond media company ownership) represent a weak spot by which the journalistic product can be manipulated. A former journalist, businessman and co-owner of *Capital* admitted to having been in a conflict of interest situation – between his own business interest and the commitments to honest journalism of his news team. “These conflicts of interest block you in a disgusting way,” he says, and suggests that: “If you are willing to do real journalism you should deal with nothing else. Nothing else!”³³ The purpose of his comment appeared to be aimed at protecting the independence and quality of the editorial product, rather than protecting the outside business of a media owner:

³² Interviews A0099 from April 16, 2010 and C0109 from May 3, 2010.

³³ Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010.

(...) What I am saying is that, especially here [in Bulgaria], it is very important to have no other [business]. Even for my miserable wine business which is non-political to a large extent I can get ‘grabbed by the balls’.

Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010

But not all media owners were similarly concerned about protecting the editorial independence of the outlets that they have control over. On the contrary, in most cases control and manipulation of the editorial product was the sole purpose for obtaining or creating a media outlet. Even if the outlet itself appears to be a profitable business project by itself, as reported in the case of BTV (Popova 2004) the possibility is always there for one or more of the proprietors to take advantage of the public opinion shaping power of a mass medium. I observed instances of direct interference in the editorial process by media owners, which I shall describe here in order to understand better mechanisms of owners’ participation in editorial decision-making.

On the first occasion, at BTV’s newsroom a brief announcement was made by the head of news at one of the editorial meetings, that “all colleagues were advised to read the interview with Krassimir Guergov in *Classa* newspaper”.³⁴ Guergov’s relationship to BTV had been concealed for years, but by the time my fieldwork started he had been confirmed as a minority shareholder in the channel, together with primary owner News Corporation (Popova 2004). In the interview Guergov demanded journalists’ loyalty to media managers and owners like himself. As the interview (Classa.bg 2009) offers a clear testimony regarding Guergov’s vision of journalistic freedom and quality I have translated part of it here, keeping the structure of sentences and the stages of the argument intact:

³⁴ Field notes F0035 from December 12, 2009.

I believe journalism as a whole is in debt to all investors who risk investing in TV projects. No journalism had until now expressed the opinion that some TV channel owners have influenced the structure of news making or current affairs programmes. This is why I think that all journalists in Bulgaria should start thinking very seriously about their loyalty to what owners and investors have given to the TV market. Because over the past 10 years since there are many serious electronic media in Bulgaria, they made it possible for all journalists to have the right to set burning topics, bringing a lot of trouble to the managers or owners of these media. At the same time, I can provide many examples of journalists who have been fired by the media because they had racketeered their viewers or produced reports based on friendships, relationships, dinners. (...) This is why I address all journalists who think that journalism is their vocation to be particularly careful and intolerant to any of their colleagues who try to abuse this freedom of speech in Bulgaria, especially in the main media of Bulgaria.

Krassimir Guergov, interview in Classa.bg (2009)

In my presence, the head of news read quotations from this text and delivered a brief instruction to the news team on the importance of loyalty to the media company and its owner. It became clear that the reason for the interview was Guergov's personal confrontation with another media heavyweight, a former television host from the times of state socialism, Kevork Kevorkian. BTV's news team members were then requested to

refrain from attending events or entering into any communication with the latter. While the instruction did not involve direct promotion of Guergov's business interests to the editorial team, it demonstrated in practice the mechanism through which the owner's interests reach down to editorial level. In this case the head of the news legitimized journalists' loyalty to the media company and its owner as a primary condition for their professional performance:

The head of the news then said: "While working in a place, a person should have loyalty to the media [outlet] and its owner. [We are] a great medium thanks to this work. The face of BTV is the news, the current affairs programmes. Your professionalism, talent and decency brought us all here, and we should not go beyond certain frames."

Field Notes F0035 from December 12, 2009

The second occasion was quite different in nature, involving a much more direct mode of interference of a newspaper owner with the editorial process. As part of it one of *Capital's* media group co-owners attended an editorial discussion and personally communicated with journalists over their work.³⁵ Two things attracted my attention. First, the entire discussion in this case was solely focused on editorial work, i.e. no external interests of the owner were considered. An experienced journalist and a co-founder of *Capital*, the company's owner was sharing his observations – critical and positive – of the quality of the editorial product and the work of journalists. There was not an instance in which he, or anyone else, referred to the owners' personal or business interests outside of the editorial process. And second, although the owner's comments came from a position of authority, there were instances in which senior editorial team members disagreed and argued back.

³⁵ Field notes G0054 from April 19, 2010.

There was no sense of absolute last-instance authority in this conversation, it felt much more like a professional discussion with a senior colleague.

Based on the two cases described, it is possible to deduce two different kinds of mass media owners' intervention in editorial processes. In the first one the owner interfered to impose external personal or business goals on editorial decision making. A perception was established among journalists, but also across other research participants, that it is acceptable for a media owner to use the editorial product for accomplishing various non-editorial purposes. This perception indicates subordinating editorial freedom to economic interests of media owners, documented in Bulgaria most recently by Štětka (2011). The second type of owners' involvement is meant to ensure that the editorial and business purposes of the news media organisation are completed, which may include improving the quality and market value of the editorial product. The latter approach is less likely to prevent journalists' from performing their societal and democratic duties to serve collective public interests. Coincidentally, both the chief editor of *Capital* and *BTV's* head of news described the commercial nature of their respective mass media, while highlighting the importance of quality of journalism for their brands. According to *Capital's* chief editor, financial independence of the newspaper is "one of the unwritten Ten Commandments" of editorial work, while quality of journalism is its main product.³⁶

5.7 The wall between editorial and sales.

The "wall" between advertising and editorial is an example of a first order professional norm which seems to be designed for the purpose of limiting the role of other norms that impose the business and other interests of media owners upon journalists' work. I have

³⁶ Interview C0109 from May 3, 2010.

documented the functioning of the “wall” in both newsrooms where participant observation has been carried out and have come across its different, sometimes opposing uses. In both newsrooms most participants expressed solid commitment to the principle of editorial independence – including from advertisers. However, in *Capital*, independence from advertisers seems to take a more distinct shape. With quality and “honesty” of journalism generally perceived as the prime features of the editorial product, resistance against any practices of selling editorial content comes across as a priority for most *Capital* and *Dnevnik* interviewees. This applies for the owners and publishers of the newspaper, the marketing and HR team, and journalists alike. Here is how one of the media group’s founders and owners formulates his approach to the possibility of offering editorial content for sale:

Already in the advertising agency when someone comes and says he would like to buy an article, they tell him: “Well, it is not possible in *Capital*”. A standard reply. And this makes things easier for us. There is no pressure from then on. Because once you did it, you get known. Once you went to bed with someone for money you cannot refuse the next time, it gets much more difficult to refuse. From this point of view it has been easy for us.

Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010

The struggle to keep editorial content clear from possible commercial interferences transpired in both the newsrooms that were studied. In BTV the possibility of journalists getting bribed or corrupted directly was never talked about in my presence. But the hypothesis for this is used to justify an unwritten rule of procedure according to which it is considered generally unacceptable to mention or spell the name of a commercial entity of

any kind as part of a news report. This is a problematic rule which in fact goes against a journalists' ability to provide the most accurate information to the audience. As a result, subjects in BTV news stories regularly appear identified only by their name and generic profession, rather than the company for which they work. The rule is interpreted differently by different editors and producers. Textual tags which identify different speakers when they appear on screen are normally inserted directly in the computer at the editing stage, and appear on a paper fiche that accompanies each edited item.

I had direct experiences with the ambivalent functioning of the 'wall.' One of the reports I produced during my period working on the paper, but also being present as a participant-observer was about an abandoned underground passage under a busy road in Sofia.³⁷ First a younger producer strictly removed the names of involved companies from the tags in my news report for the evening news. Then a more experienced producer left them intact for the next day's morning news that she was in charge of. On another occasion in my report over public transportation hygiene in Sofia³⁸ the producer in charge only removed the names of private transportation companies but left the name of the municipal bus enterprise – the apparent logic being that private companies are potential advertisers and should not be promoted without paying. This logic, formally aimed at maintaining the 'wall' between editorial and advertising, achieves in fact its entire removal, suggesting that the editorial should exclude any information that could indirectly promote a company, brand or product – thus placing quality and accuracy of information in an inferior position to potential sales value.

The reality is somewhat different at *Capital*. Accepting money for promotion through the news contents is not tolerated there either. But the issue is actively addressed and

³⁷ Field notes F0030 from December 11, 2009.

³⁸ Field notes F0046 from January 14, 2010.

discussed. Potential conflict of interest in the production of an automobiles supplement was addressed by one of *Capital's* senior editors at a team meeting.³⁹ Journalists are inherently free from suspicion, unless proved otherwise, and *Capital's* editorial policy is to disclose company names or other details of any company whereby this is dictated by editorial needs. As observed elsewhere, almost paradoxically, it is *Capital* where participants seemed much more comfortable with and aware of the existence of the 'wall,' that more participants are willing to speak about it, discuss and even challenge its position.

5.8 Profit making as editorial, occupational and employment priority.

In the course of field research I have come across evidence that profit making and business is not only essential for the operations of a media organisation but is also becoming a top priority for the shaping of editorial contents. For *Capital* it is part of the paper's overall concept: to be the newspaper for the emerging entrepreneurial, business-minded classes of post-socialist Bulgaria. This explains to some extent why democracy and human rights sometimes got secondary priority or even got neglected within *Capital's* editorial process, e.g. in the discussion over a thematic issue on China with purely economic focus.⁴⁰

Business and corporate stories are welcome by news editors and perceived as important and interesting by journalists, not only at *Capital*, which is identified as a business newspaper, but also by a general profile news broadcaster such as BTV. More particularly, editorial priority was given to stories about making – or losing money. It appears profit was more attractive to senior editors than corporate responsibility or charitable actions, undertaken by a business company. BTV's Head of News made an important distinction

³⁹ Field notes G0532 from April 12, 2010 .

⁴⁰ Field notes G0532 from April 12, 2010.

between a charitable act of a company -- which, in her view, could rarely be worth reporting -- and profit-making:

The subject of news is something extraordinary, news is extreme. If the company has done something extraordinary, for example, even in the middle of crisis, some companies are still making profit, this is news. Then we can cover that, because there is a tendency, something interesting – some people are making profit, - well done, - how?

Interview C0110-0111 from May 3, 2010

The urge for making profit has dimensions that reach far beyond editorial considerations, within occupational and employment practices. Seeking to recover from a reported drop of income from advertising *Capital's* management undertook a structured effort to optimize sales by employing the knowledge of journalists. Both a co-owner⁴¹ of the newspaper and a marketing official of Economedia, the publishing group behind the newspaper, described a series of workshops implemented during spring 2010⁴². Bringing together journalists and sales persons, the workshops' purpose was to enhance two-way communication exchange between journalists covering business affairs and sales persons seeking knowledge about potential business clients. Elena, who works for *Capital's* marketing team, described the rationale of the workshops as follows:

Journalists let the advertising department know that a new company has appeared in the market, or that a certain company is launching a

⁴¹ Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010.

⁴² Interview A0115-0116 from May 5, 2010.

new product line, which is invaluable information that may otherwise reach the advertising department in a month's time and so lose the opportunity to propose a campaign to that advertiser. For example, nobody from the advertising department knew the marketing director of the new mall, but journalists knew her very well.

Interviews A0115-0116 from May 5, 2012

A corporate vocabulary, borrowed directly from the US-based majority owner of BTV, seems to replace the traditional nomenclature of job titles. For someone returning to the newsroom after more than a decade, it has been striking to encounter a whole new tier within the editorial hierarchy: that of 'producers'.⁴³ Producers form a new, lowest level of decision making within the newsroom, between editors and chief editors, and ordinary news staff. As suggested by their job titles, it is the producers' task to 'produce' the news content. The use of industrial and business terminology in this case suggests that news content is in turn a 'product' – something put on the market for sale. This is a semantic indication of commercialisation and marketisation of journalism, equalizing it to any other production industry, and portraying the market value of journalists' 'produce' as the primary criterion for their professional performance. In effect this perception deals a heavy blow upon journalists' ability and motivation to act upon the societal and democratic duties of their profession, as defined by 'Fourth estate' theory, and upgrades third order professional norms, related the business aspects of journalism, to a position of priority over social or professional considerations.

There are other problematic aspects around the role of a 'producer.' In my editorial observations quoted above a producer was always the first – and in most cases the only –

⁴³ Field notes F0025 from November 17, 2009.

point of contact between the journalist and the editorial hierarchy. In spite of their job title not suggesting it, producers act as the lowest level of editorial control. In most cases it is producers, rather than editors and chief editors, who impose their judgements and decisions of what is acceptable to go on air, and what is not. Usually much younger, less experienced, and lacking authority in the editorial hierarchy, producers are well trained to apply the rules and norms without taking any risks. Producers are therefore key agents of peer-pressure upon fellow journalists that eventually shapes self-control and self-censorship. Participants have suggested that other television stations have also implemented the vocabulary and functionality of ‘producers’ in their newsroom hierarchies.

My attention was directed to the role of news producers from almost the first day spent at BTV. That was when a morning show host and former colleague introduced me to the new realities of television work. Here is an extract from my field notes on that day:

[Anna] finds her job as a news anchor slightly boring and not really fulfilling. She says it feels awkward for her often to read the texts prepared by the producers. “They tend to follow an endless line of unimportant events,” she says: “who said what, what did another person respond, what happened after, and so on. But these are things that only they [the producers] follow; viewers cannot know all these things, and certainly cannot follow them.” (...) She explains that very often a large portion of the news consists of quoting different public or political figures: “It feels very awkward to read several sentences in a row that are not your own thoughts, and then end up with ‘- said mister so-and-so’. I feel that the viewers get confused, because

these statements come from my mouth, they probably wonder why am I saying this, or why do I think so, before they hear that it is someone else I am dubbing for.”

Field notes F0025 from November 17, 2009

More conventional forms of occupational pressure were also experienced by research participants. These include shortening of staff for the purpose of optimizing performance and boosting profit. *Capital* was entering a period of financial difficulties just about the time of my stay there, which to some extent justified the freezing of salaries, consolidating positions, losing staff and merging the news teams of different Economedia print outlets into one shared newsroom. But even BTV, with its self-proclaimed market domination, was limiting recruitment and shortening staff numbers, at a time of its ownership passing from News Corporation to CME:

We only felt the material impact of this change, thank God this did not affect people's salaries, but for example we could not recruit as many people as we needed, etc. We could not even get replacements for people who took maternity leave. Two years ago we had planned new positions for cameramen, for car replacements, cameras, etc. - but none of these have materialized. But people understand that we are in a crisis, we are in the middle of an ordeal, so they get mobilised.

Interview C0110-0111-0112 from May 3, 2010

At the same time, particularly at BTV – and other television stations and programmes mentioned by participants – recruitment of interns and young inexperienced people who

work for little or no remuneration is popularly practiced.⁴⁴ *Capital* sets an exclusion from this trend, due to its very specific recruitment practices.⁴⁵

5.9. *Journalists and democracy.*

Studying journalists' understanding and attitude to the democratic and societal responsibilities of their profession helped accomplish the research goals of my project. I aimed to detect their awareness and attitude to this part of the job, particularly in comparison to the economic and business loyalties of journalists. The issue took shape across my research data in close relationship with other issues, such as journalists' attitudes to issues of social importance that require collective action, namely, environment, climate change and tobacco smoking, which will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

In the context of tensions between normative orders of professional journalism, participants attribute a great part of the external pressures and limitations that they face in their work to the general media environment of Bulgaria. In the words of a participant, "when all the yards in a village are messy, your yard will also get messier; if the entire village is clean, then everyone keeps clean."⁴⁶ It seemed that journalists are aware of the conditions that the social and media reality impose but are not necessarily compliant with them. Participants discussed ways to oppose and withstand pressure, and often provided anecdotal evidence of how they have managed to do it in their personal experiences. The sense of inevitable resistance and willingness to withstand pressure seemed rooted in participants' awareness of the societal functions of journalism, the 'Fourth estate' theory

⁴⁴ Interview C0106 from May 3, 2010.

⁴⁵ Interview A0115-0116 from May 5, 2010.

⁴⁶ Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010.

and the package of professional norms related to them. As mentioned already, a conception of ‘honest journalism’ comes across in the research data as one of the suggested strategies for avoiding pressure and maintaining one’s independence from control and editorial interference. One participant, one of *Capital*’s co-founders, described the relation between the two:

There have been various kinds of pressure, bullying. They have been coming to us all the time. The whole thing is that, if they believe that someone is writing honestly then they accept that it is better to convince him rather than kill him. (...) This is what probably saved our heads.

Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010

Honesty in this sense appears to be a survival strategy for journalists who do not wish to accept political or economic interference. In the account of most participants at *Capital* it seemed to have worked: a general sense that the newspaper’s newsroom is a sort of a safe haven for independent journalism prevails⁴⁷. But it was never all that safe. Several participants from *Capital*’s news team have spoken of incidents when they were threatened⁴⁸, taken to court⁴⁹ or attacked physically⁵⁰ for their journalistic work. My observation was that in most such occasions the journalists who were targeted by pressure or attack seemed to have become resilient and confident in their ability to remain independent in their editorial work.

⁴⁷ Interviews: A0124-0125 from August 20, 2010; C0106 from May 3, 2010; C0107-0108 from May 3, 2010; A0115-0116 from May 5, 2010; and elsewhere.

⁴⁸ Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010.

⁴⁹ Interview A0122-0123 from August 19, 2010.

⁵⁰ Interview C0107-0108 from May 3, 2010.

Research data suggest that journalists commonly perceived their actions as moral – a phenomenon discussed in the US context by Gans (1979), Glasser and Ettema (1991) among others. The feeling that journalists are there to help others, bring positive change to their lives and be appreciated for it already surfaced earlier in this chapter. The notion of journalists as the champions of social interest was shared by many research participants and is connected to the so-called watchdog function of journalism as defined under ‘Fourth estate’ theory (McQuail 1994). It is in this context that the term ‘honest journalism’ originates from journalists’ own vocabulary and reflection on their profession. Unlike professional norms that are socially and institutionally determined, ‘honesty’ is defined by individual moral judgment. It is certainly at odds with the “moral and emotional detachment from topics and subjects of news” imposed by objectivity norms (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p.559). Deciding what is honest, dishonest, decent or morally unacceptable introduces a personal dimension to the implementation of professional norms and thematic, technological or quality divisions within journalism. It has a lot to do with the value systems and discourses that dominate Bulgaria’s contemporary post-socialist society. The popular notion of ‘honest journalism’ is then a positive sign that loyalty to societal and democratic functions of journalism still hold ground against an overwhelming discourse of marketisation and commercialisation in the post-socialist newsrooms. A quote from one of *Capital’s* owners and co-founders offered a half-joking description of his personal satisfaction with the newspaper’s success as a business endeavour based on “honest journalism,” in comparison with other media owners:

I said to myself that these people are ultra-unhappy. They probably have money. They probably enjoy chatting with [Prime Minister] Boyko [Borissov] by the first name. But I do not think they are satisfied with themselves and are punishing themselves this way. At the end of the day when

you do bad things, when you are corrupt, dishonest, and so on, you are not at peace with yourself.

Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010

Further, Angel commented half-jokingly on his newspapers' commitment to quality journalism in the context of Bulgaria's post-socialist media and reporting environment. In it he cautiously steered away from the label of 'business newspaper' often applied to Economedia's publications:

We are not a business newspaper. This [understanding] comes from the name, or from the beginning [of *Capital*]. Even if you look at *Dnevnik*, I have always wanted to avoid [this label]. It is the 'operational', 'active', 'affairs-oriented' daily. It is about being first [to know]. Which by no means stands for 'businesses'. It is more about, let's call it, "no bullshit" journalism (laughs): to set the agenda and to include what really is important. Not to live only on crime news and so on. (...) It is all about your context, your entire [being].

Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010

5.10 Journalism education.

Professional education plays a crucial role in the shaping of journalists' perception of what their profession is – and is not – about, and of their actions in practice. Using the observations of Carey (2000 p. 16) and Aldridge and Evetts (2003) I closely examined the participants' experiences with professional education in the field of journalism. Education

is apparently important because it has the greatest potential to shape journalists' professional values and prepare them to implement them in practice. As someone who graduated from Sofia University's Department of Journalism and Mass Communications and was involved with delivering professional training courses for journalists in post-socialist countries over the past decades, I have been interested in better understanding the outcomes and impacts of other journalistic training workshops in the opinions of journalists who took part in them. Data analysis suggests four major categories of references to education. The first one gathers all references to formal education in journalism, obtained from official educational institutions, including universities and secondary schools with special classes in journalism. The second category refers to professional training delivered at training courses, seminars, workshops, by trainers or journalists. A separate category emerged for those cases where participants learned about journalism in practice. And finally, there are the accounts of those who for one reason or another never had a chance to take professional training. Below I summarize the outcomes from my critical examination of all these references through the lenses of the theoretical framework of this research.

While there is a more or less shared agreement among participants that university education in journalism in Bulgaria is weak, the attitudes to it of those participants who graduated from other fields of study sound much more dismissive than the ones of journalism school graduates. The most frequent criticism against journalism graduates is that they are generalists who lack adequate knowledge in any field. A participant coined her own terms to describe what a journalism faculty graduate is in her opinion: an "everythingologist."⁵¹ A co-owner and long-time chief editorial team member at *Capital* who has the power to decide on the new recruitments in the newspaper shared the following view:

⁵¹ Interview A00124-0125 from August 20, 2010.

I was even joking at one time that if a journalist arrives in his last year of university, without having worked anything, I would throw his CV straight into the dustbin. (...) If you are a last year student of journalism and have not started working already, then you are absolutely lazy – or retired. (...) In principle I do not believe in journalism education. You may take a course of journalism or anything, but you need to be a specialist of something, and have a journalist profile, not vice versa.

Interview A0096 from April 16, 2010

There may be some well-justified reasons for such prejudice against journalism school graduates. Participants, including those who took formal education in journalism, referred to it as weak,⁵² excessively theoretical⁵³ and lacking practical value in relation to the real needs of journalistic practice⁵⁴. A typical recollection of her time in the journalism department of Sofia University was offered by a leading editorial team member at *Capital's* news desk:

My time [studying journalism] changed a lot my ideas about whether one should study journalism or not and how. I think it is wrong to invest four or five years to be trained as a journalist. In fact, from my current point of view, I think it would be better to study something else, and then have one or two years of specialisation as a journalist. In this way one has a beat or background on an issue that one is well-versed in. Otherwise,

⁵² Interview A0096-0097-0098 from April 13, 2010

⁵³ Interview E0104 from May 1, 2010

⁵⁴ Interview C0107-0108 from May 3, 2010

one goes through everything in the first year – philosophy, history, economics, etc. One would pointlessly cram a bit of it all...

Interview A0122-012 from August 19, 2010

A leading news reporter and host at BTV also shared her criticism with the type of university education in journalism that she obtained in the Sofia University:

(...) One has a serious gap between the things one learns in school and reality as it is. In my practice I learned more than in the Journalism faculty. (...) [Journalism] education in Bulgaria is structured on an extremely academic level and the opportunity to practice what you learn is far more limited.

Similar weaknesses appear in references to secondary school journalism education – perhaps not surprisingly as according to participants' accounts, it was usually led by professors in the existing university department of journalism in their cities as well as by practicing journalists. Here is the description of a radio journalism class at high-school offered by a television news reporter:

(...) Everyone was teaching different things. For example one was coming with a pile of newspapers and was making us read newspapers, not theories. We had another lecturer who was working in some radio, perhaps *Radio Bravo* in Varna, who was teaching us basic theory, e.g. an information announcement - how do you write it and what questions does it need to answer, or a report, how do you write it, what questions does it need to

answer? But there was very little theory. Most lecturers were finding some non-standard approach. For example the one with the newspapers was working for a private radio in Shumen that had the highest rating. He was focusing on practice. We told him "It won't work like this - two hours every Wednesday morning, please find us a spot on the radio", and we started our own 15 minutes weekly spot in *Mria* [Radio] every Sunday.

Interview A0096-0097-0098 from April 13, 2010

The above description offers a typical case where two of the education categories identified by my research overlap: formal education, and education in practice. As it seemed to a majority of research participants the latter comes in as a natural replacement of the former, or at least a necessary compensation for its weaknesses. Almost every journalist who participated in this research project had a story or experience of learning the job in practice. Most of these experiences were regarded very positively by participants. But as exciting and positive as it sounds, the trend of prioritizing learning in practice over theoretical education is somewhat problematic. At first glance prioritizing practical experience over theory seems reasonable, in view of earlier critics against journalistic education being over theoretical and lacking practical value. This is why most participants have praised the opportunity to put their hands on practical journalistic work as early as possible in the course of their education. But releasing young persons, from sixteen years old onwards, straight into journalistic practice without any proper theoretical preparation leaves them unprepared for the role, duty and responsibility of a journalist, the kinds of pressures to be expected, and the ways to handle and resist them. Such 'education' in effect prevents a young generation of journalists from properly understanding the societal and democratic functions of a journalist, replacing it instead with the sense of celebrity and fun, while clearly suggesting that there are no rules to follow and rely on that determine what is

proper journalism. At the same time, the tendency of relying on the experience and practice of others to learn what journalism is carries the risk of repeating and multiplying their weaknesses. Not least, learning in practice easily subjects new journalists to peer pressure, which is one of the primary avenues of limiting journalistic freedom. All these pave the way for easier control and manipulation of journalists' performance and loyalty to media owners, and leave the advance of market and business priorities in the newsrooms largely unchallenged.

The fact that a large number of research participants who take leading editorial positions are journalism school graduates contributed partially to this analysis. On the one hand, most of them are well aware of the societal and democratic aspects of their job - and their deficit in practice - which could indicate that in spite of all weaknesses, their journalistic education has imbued them with some sense of professional ethics. On the other, the state of formal education in journalism seems to bear at least part of the responsibility for the low resistance capacity of journalists against market and business pressure over their professional performance. For all of them, regardless of their previous education, there is one more possibility to shape their understanding of journalism: professional training.

Participants have reported on their experiences with professional training of various kinds. Most training programmes, attended by participants, were organised abroad, or with the help and participation of foreign media or donor institutions in Bulgaria. Within such training there are two major types: professional training delivered by media organisations or foundations related to them; and ones hosted by governmental, public, or even business institutions. The former kind of training seems to be offered to Bulgarian journalists by institutions like: the Reuters Foundation, the BBC, the Guardian Foundation, and some US-based institutions and experts. Training of the later kind were hosted for instance by the EU, non-profit and advocacy organisations working in different thematic fields. There

have been training workshops of mixed types, dedicated to a specific thematic or advocacy field, but involving media professionals and institutions in the teaching process. Academic institutions like the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest have been involved in training journalists from the post-socialist region.

Regardless of hosting institutions or particular trainers, all training programmes promise to develop skills and understanding of journalism that should help them improve their professional performance. As a principle, these training programmes deliver the normative and value framework of Western journalism, which is dominated by an Anglo-American model of journalism (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Hallin and Mancini do not include Central and Eastern Europe in their classification of Western media systems – supporting my general point that journalism and media systems in the post-socialist region are not well defined, are under-studied, and their character is in development. At the same time they acknowledge that the Anglo-American journalistic model is strongly dominated by market and business priorities in itself. Professional training can therefore also be seen as physical demonstrations of the concept of the neoliberal ‘classroom’ that post-socialist Europe has been turned into, according to Kuus (2007 p. 153).

Of course there has been much more to professional training than market and business imperatives. Participants frequently gave positive evaluations of skills obtained at training and capacity building programmes. Training opportunities by the BBC and the Guardian Foundation for instance have received generally high praise by former trainees. An example of this is the following account by an experienced news reporter at BTV:

I had four weeks at BBC which I find most useful with respect to preliminary investigation, organising of shooting, putting together a team for a bigger form such as a film or an extended

feature. I was at the department which deals with documentary films. I think this has generally changed for me things such as discipline, attention to research and methodology.

Interview A0092 from March 12, 2010, continued as E0100-0101-0103 from April 21, 2010

The same participant later attended a two-month training programme in the US, which she described as found similarly useful, but “more about formulating a model, following certain principles, it was a bit like a textbook, creating a technology, a sequence of steps to be followed that can be useful in one's practice.” Comparing these two programmes to various EU training courses she took, the participant rated higher the “purely journalistic” ones over topical and specialized programmes, and ones involving practical work over lecturing and seminars.⁵⁵ This evaluation was shared by most other participants who could compare different training possibilities. As an exception from this observation, a participant recalled gaining much in terms of practical skills and approach to Roma-related issues from a minority reporting course at the CEU⁵⁶.

Both BTV and *Capital* offered news-room based professional training to their editorial staff. In this respect the two newsrooms selected for my research fall in a separate league, as few other media organisations in Bulgaria are known to train their editorial staff. In the case of BTV this took place in conjunction with its majority share-holder News Corporation. Several participants referred to a chief trainer from the US who visited BTV and delivered professional instruction to its journalists, namely, Professor Sam Swan from the Mass Communication Department of the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. I also witnessed a one-hour long instruction for the news team, delivered by BTV's lawyers.

⁵⁵ Interview A0092 from March 12, 2010, continued as E0100-0101-0103 from April 21, 2010.

⁵⁶ Interview A0124-0125 from August 20, 2010.

During this session journalists were told what their rights and obligations are with regard to photographing people without their consent, when police or other law enforcement officers issue instructions to them or demand to check or confiscate their footage.

In the case of *Capital* the source of professional training and norms was Reuters, particularly in the early years when the UK-based agency had a minority financial stake in the newspaper. Applying the Reuters' standards of journalism has made *Capital's* editorial content distinguishable from the rest of Bulgaria's press, which has tended to follow and apply the style and norms of the 'yellow' tabloid press. But adhering to the norms of a news agency was also a source of editorial tensions in a news desk with clear taste for feature writing and deeper social analysis. In recent years professional training at *Capital* was delivered in conjunction with the Guardian Foundation and other institutions. There is also a foundation attached to *Capital* whose mission involves enhancing and perfection of journalism. The Capital Foundation was running a two-year' long capacity building project at the time of my participant observation work in the newsroom.

While the majority of participants highlighted the practical aspects of the training they took and did not pay much attention to any ideological or conceptual features of the curriculum, the possibility that such training streamlined the pro-market and pro-business minded agenda also surfaced in the testimonies of former training participants. In the most striking case, a leading editorial figure at *Capital*, recalled the first training she took in the mid-1990s. In her early 20s, she confronted an American instructor who maintained that journalists need to be supportive while reporting on investment and business developments rather than focus on the possible negative social or environmental consequences that it might have.⁵⁷ The same participant offered a useful description of the way in which she

⁵⁷ Interview A0124-0125 from August 20, 2010.

was exposed to the imperative of moral and emotional detachment from topics and subjects of news at a different training around that time:

(...) the most frequent remark I got from my tutors – was that I tend to comment [too much] (...) For example, there was a press-conference by the leader of the take-over group, so I write: “So and so he said with a trembling voice...” We had everything in video, audio, etc. (...) So I put in a lot of atmosphere and attitude. [The tutors] told me “No, that's absolutely prohibited! Do not comment, no adjectives.” Everything should be absolutely clean and sterile; we were not allowed [to write differently]. That was in December 1994, and that contact inspired great respect in me.

Interview A0124-0125 from August 20, 2010

The described experiences suggest that many Bulgarian journalists who took professional courses may have been exposed to norms and value judgements that go beyond the norms and standards of journalism, promote market values over collective or democratic priorities, and support a neoliberal worldview.

5.11 Conclusions.

Based on research data journalists' attitudes to their profession were grouped into seven categories: like, dislike, freedom, limitation, power, 'honest journalism,' and no idea or attitude to journalism. Although each of these categories received broad and sometimes opposing interpretations by journalists participating in the research, it is possible to

observe that most of them 'like' their profession. For many, fascination with journalism began in childhood. Among factors such as appreciation by colleagues and the public or the reputation of their mass-media employer, journalists are strongly motivated by their job's potential of pursuing change in the life of others. On the contrary, the sense that one's journalistic work leads to no change is described as a discouraging experience. So journalists in Bulgaria appear to generally like their job, partially because they feel that it enables them to bring about change in society and the lives of others.

But they are not necessarily free to act upon the urge for social improvements or change. Journalists' recollections of their parents' frustrations with journalism during Bulgaria's state socialist past revealed striking parallels with today's state of the profession. Among them is the relationship of journalists to political and economic powers of the day, which seemed to put journalists in dependencies. Journalists' ability to retain a clean professional conscience is essential for the personal satisfaction of journalists with their jobs. The concept of professional and creative freedom appeared to be central in this respect.

Starting from the freedom to ask questions and learn facts that are important for the public the understanding of 'freedom' is often associated to professional norms which regulate it. Editorial freedom takes different and sometimes opposing interpretations: while some journalists accept editorial norms but are sensitive to the attempts of media owners and newsroom superiors to limit their creative freedom, others define freedom as the absence of norms whatsoever. In the absence of professional norms journalists are easier to manipulate and their professional decisions can become arbitrary and unpredictable.

Professional norms do not offer a panacea either. Grouped in three normative 'orders,' in the terms of Bennett (1996 p.375), they often contradict and compete with each other in journalists' daily practice. Norms that regulate the practice of journalism, such as

objectivity, neutrality or balance, are interpreted differently by different journalists and editors, and seem to conflict with norms related to journalists' mission to help individual or collective interests and usher in positive change, as mentioned earlier. A third order of business-related norms that refer to journalists' role as loyal employees serving the economic interest of media owners seemed to prevail over the other two normative orders, suggesting neoliberalisation of the journalistic field in the terms of Bourdieu (1998a).

This business-related order seemed to be taking priority and domination over other journalistic norms. Norms and professional standards function as instruments of control – both by superiors, and self-imposed (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p. 556) – in Bulgaria's post-socialist practice of journalism. Participants defined two avenues of pressure and control on their professional freedom: external – originating outside of their newsroom -- and internal, acting within the editorial team of the respective mass media organisation. Journalists' accounts revealed that the business interests of media owners are always a source of pressure on their work. Media owners directly interfere in editorial processes, using the newsroom hierarchy for this. A general perception exists almost unchallenged according to which it is acceptable for a media owner to use the editorial product for his or her non-editorial purposes.

A professional norm designed to protect editorial content from the interference of advertisers is subject to pressure even in the most quality-journalism oriented newsrooms in Bulgaria. Willingness to lower the 'wall' between advertising and editorial in one case, and the use of this norm to effectively limit the freedom and quality of journalism in another, revealed increasing tension between professional normative orders. Profit and income making have gradually gained prominent position both as editorial themes, and as principles of employment and occupational practice within newsrooms. An illustration of this is the new prominent role acquired by 'producers' who form the lowest tier of editorial

control in television newsrooms, without in fact holding the authority and credentials of a traditional editor. Other occupational and employment developments that seem to serve profit making and sacrifice editorial quality include reducing the number of staff, freezing salaries, recruiting young, inexperienced persons and interns for little or no pay.

Some research participants used the term 'honest journalism' to define their understanding of professional quality, related to the societal and democracy aspects of journalism. Their choice of words linked professional decisions to personal qualities like honesty and moral, in contrast with pressure and editorial limitations, which are perceived as organisational. 'Honest journalism' as a concept signifies journalists' intuitive willingness for resistance against the advance of market and commercial priorities in the post-socialist newsrooms and beyond.

This advance undermines primarily the societal and democratic functions of Bulgarian journalism. Formal education and professional training in journalism do not offer an adequate response to this. While university education in Bulgaria was deemed shallow and useless by the majority of participants in the research, both aspiring journalists and their employees resort to learning 'on the job': a worrying trend which undermines journalists' understanding of the societal and democratic role that their profession entails. Learning in practice and peer pressure prevail in the professional field in Bulgaria, preventing journalists from obtaining a sense of professional norms that might guide their performance and protect it from any kind of corrupt external pressures. A set of Anglo-American professional norms, delivered by the means of professional training abroad and donor-funded projects and workshops in Bulgaria, do not appear to compensate for this weakness. In addition, professional training is also used for promoting a business-friendly ethos and justifying the domination of market and business values in Bulgaria's newsrooms.

CHAPTER SIX

Environmental and climate change in two stories from Bulgaria's journalistic field

6.1. Introduction to and structure of this chapter.

Climate and environmental change are the first thematic issues of collective importance that I am examining in my attempt to understand better how professional journalists in post-socialist Bulgaria balance their commitments to society and democracy with the increasing influence of economic and market priorities over their work. As the previous chapter makes clear, contemporary journalistic practice in Bulgaria is subject to market and economic influences. These influences are often related to the business interests of media owners, which usually reach far beyond the boundaries of mass media industry and into various economic and business spheres. As part of Europe's post-socialist eastern periphery, Bulgaria has undergone two decades of unlimited exposure to market, business and economic values, which have come to dominate almost all spheres of life. These values are on collision course with the understanding of civil obligations to collectively address ecological destruction and loss of common goods – typical features of the discourse around environment protection and climate change. This chapter will investigate the borderline zone where the two discourses confront each other and the way this confrontation transpires in the practice of journalism observed during my research fieldwork in 2009 – 2010.

For this purpose I shall concentrate on two cases documented during my participant observation research work in Bulgaria during 2009 – 2010. The first one is about the documentary *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach*, the broadcast of which by BTV in November 2009 stirred a major controversy between representatives of tourist and construction businesses and the editorial and management team of BTV over a local environmental and social problem: the uncontrolled urbanisation and excessive development of Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. A dominant discourse that prioritizes economic development and business profit over the collective interest of preserving common environmental assets and respecting land and urban planning regulations was at stake, and the professional integrity of BTV's journalists was in the centre of the debate. The second case concerns the UN climate change summit held in Copenhagen in December 2009 and the way in which Bulgarian journalists interpreted the political, economic and social dilemmas debated at the forum.

I will present these two cases as stories, using various types of research data. This includes field notes from my participant observation in Bulgarian newsrooms, records of semi-structured interviews with research participants, published works on the topics of interest for this research, public statements of different entities and websites of the mass media involved. To be able to contain it within reasonable length, I have limited the story to what I have observed, experienced, and learned about climate change and journalistic practice within the time framework of my fieldwork, that is roughly between November 2009 and July 2010. Episodes and developments outside this period are mentioned in the interest of giving a fuller picture. The conclusions from the two case stories will be summarized at the end of the chapter.

6.2. *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach.*

In a declaration issued on November 27, 2009 sixteen tourism business associations, hotel and restaurant owners' associations and other non-governmental entities protested against the upcoming broadcast of a documentary sequel by BTV, entitled *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* (Shikerova 2009). The declaration, addressed to Bulgaria's prime minister Boyko Borissov and copied to the minister of economy, energy and tourism Traycho Traykov; the acting chair of the Council for Electronic Media, Bulgaria's regulatory body in the field, Maria Stefanova; and to BTV's general director Vicky Politova, claims that its authors are "extremely upset by the ambition of such a prestigious mass media to work against the national interests of Bulgaria." The style and content of the declaration is indicative of the pressure exerted on journalists and society by investment and business interests, which is why I here present its major points in English (translated from DarikNews 2009a). First, acknowledging that they still have not seen the film but just its "aggressive" promotion, the authors present a list of arguments that in their view counter the claims of the film:

(...) Although the film has not been broadcast yet we are extremely alarmed by its intended suggestions, without pointing at the actual development of the [Sunny Beach] complex:

- its meaning for the development of Bulgaria's economy;
- the "milliards of BGN" investments by private business over the past 10 years;
- tens of thousands workplaces ensured;
- assistance for tens of others industries connected to tourism;
- its role in building the country's image during the 50 years that have been most competitive for Bulgaria's tourism; and

- millions of income to Bulgaria's national treasury from the increased accommodation capacity.

The film's promotional trailer – the only part that the declaration's signatories admittedly have seen – is built around a single statement: that at the moment Sunny Beach is nothing but a “concrete ghetto,” similar to what has happened in Spain. This is not the first time that construction irregularities in Sunny Beach have made headlines, and the promotional trailer does not promise that the documentary should reveal anything new or previously unheard. So what is it about this film that makes the representatives of the industries so suddenly worried, even before it went on air? To answer this question I analysed the text of their protest declaration, the response of BTV, and the personal accounts of the film's main author, news reporter Genka Shikerova, examining the way in which each of them interpreted journalistic norms in this case, and searching for any evidence of possible neoliberal influences that prioritize market and business interest in the practice and decision-making mechanisms of journalism.

From the protest declaration it appears that apart from the sheer facts and visual evidence of irregularities shown in the film, their perpetrators were disturbed by its comparative approach. The authors opted for two lines of comparison: one to Spain, where similar developments lead to widely reported cases of demolition of illegally built property by the state; and - perhaps more importantly - to Sunny Beach itself. Along the second line, the resort is compared retrospectively to its original concept and its implementation up until 1989. The film highlights visually and narratively the contrast between the careful planning and construction of Sunny Beach as a nature-friendly green family resort in one of the most fascinating natural spots of Bulgaria's seaside from the 1950s to the 1980s, and the bleak reality of today. Following two decades of political, regulatory and building development after 1989, the film shows Sunny Beach as an over-populated, over-

urbanized, over-commercialized, non-hygienic and deforested territory without proper planning and infrastructure. Its contemporary business model is presented as attracting low-cost mass tourism, featuring cheap entertainment, consumption, alcohol and easy access to sex and drugs. Only in this context does the film depict the destruction of existing greenery and wilderness (including formerly protected dune formations), escalating pressure on surrounding ecosystems from inadequate sewage treatment, waste collection and other environmental pressure factors in Sunny Beach. Watching it suggests that what has happened over the past two decades is ‘all very wrong’, and certainly inferior to the developments of the area during socialism. The authors of the protest declaration sent to Prime Minister Borissov the list of arguments, quoted above, in an attempt to prove this and other suggestions of the film wrong and prevent BTV’s audiences from exposure to them. They accused BTV of “blowing up the years-long efforts of millions of Bulgarian managers, owners and employers who invested in Bulgaria in the name of a branch [of the economy] that is of priority for the country and sets the structure of our economy.” This intervention shows what is at stake in this confrontation: the priority in the production of television news content of the market, business profits and short-term economic interest over issues of collective importance such as nature protection and cleaner environment in the production of television news content.

Using a mixture of interviews with different actors in the development of Sunny Beach from the 1950s to date, narration, archive and actual footage, the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* documentary demonstrates the real-life impact over the last two decades of the unlimited advance of market and economic values in the conditions of weak or non-functional democratic institutions in Bulgaria. Without ever naming it or conceptualizing beyond the pure facts and images, the documentary reveals the personal, political and administrative channels and mechanisms through which a neoliberal ideology affects not only the social and economic structures of society, but also the landscape and the built and

natural environment of post-socialist societies. The film presents Sunny Beach as a showcase of comparison between the real-life impacts of this contemporary ideology against another one, which had dominated Bulgaria prior to 1989 – state socialism. Furthermore, the comparison between planning and construction practices, good governance, law enforcement, nature protection, and – paradoxically – tourist business sales and marketing of today and some 40 – 50 years ago, appears unfavourable for today's political and economic order of neoliberal capitalism and reveals significant deficiencies in the functioning of democracy and the rule of law. Such a suggestion contradicts the dominant 'transition' discourse which portrays the post-socialist development as a unidirectional process from one point to another (Smith and Pickles 1998) and puts into question neoliberal claims that market mechanisms and business development offer the best possible response to collective social interest.

It is important to clarify that little – if any – of the critical debate on the role of neoliberal market and business imperatives in what has happened to Sunny Beach is articulated directly by the film. The documentary keeps a steady distance from any political or ideological commentary and any critical conclusions are left to the viewers to make. In her interview for this study project, the primary author of *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach*, BTV news reporter Genka Shikerova, denied any interest in critical political or social research⁵⁸. And yet, the film's appearance in the programme of the most popularly watched commercial channel of Bulgaria has had a profound impact, as demonstrated by the reaction against it by the associations of businesses and other net financial beneficiaries from recent developments in Sunny Beach. Their protest declaration was a last-minute attempt to prevent the film from broadcasting by defending the developments through trying to present Sunny Beach in a positive light, questioning the professional

⁵⁸ Interview with Genka Shikerova from December 10, 2009.

integrity of the film's authors and mobilizing administrative and other types of pressures against BTV.

Important from the viewpoint of the current research, the authors of the protest declaration did not even for a short period of time resort to the power of their macro-economic and other arguments in favour of Sunny Beach, listed above. Equal representation of these arguments against the suggestions made by the film was not what they aimed for. They wanted the film stopped, so in a paragraph later in the text they attempted direct pressure on BTV through different channels to prevent it from broadcasting. These channels are visible from the list of recipients of the declaration: its primary recipient is Prime Minister Borissov, who is apparently seen by the authors as the primary broker of media influence. Carbon-copied recipients include the ministry of economy and tourism, the state regulator of electronic media, and the business management of BTV. Of course, the declaration was also announced to the press, thus making its contents known to the broad public, but notably misses the Chief Editor of BTV's news, and the Committee for Media Ethics – the self-regulatory body that is supposed to control and ensure the quality and decency of journalistic practices. It is possible to conclude from this absence, that the industry associations have no intention to seek a fair representation of their point of view within the rules of quality journalism. Instead, apart from the Prime Minister, the protesters against *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* prefer to appeal elsewhere for direct influence on BTV: to the state administration apparatus, and to the business ownership and management of the channel. It is direct pressure through these channels that the text of the protest declaration attempts to convey further (original formatting preserved):

No other country in the world tolerates such behaviour by its
(mass) media, not only in the situation of a world economic
crisis but in the perspective of fierce competition in the

international touristic market. In practice, this is a betrayal of the national interests of Bulgarian tourism and a blow for the reputation of the country as a tourist destination in the hardest time for Bulgaria's economy.

Moreover, in the first place the forthcoming television sequel is in contradiction with article 10, paragraph, point 6 of the Radio and Television Act, according to which "when performing its activity radio and television operators are guided by the following principles: (...) NOT ALLOWING A BROADCAST WHICH CONTRADICTS THE GOOD MORAL – NATIONAL INTERESTS, EQUALITY, AND SO ON." Secondly, it contradicts "THE RIGHT OF FREE EXPRESSION OF DIFFERENT IDEAS AND OPINIONS IN SOCIETY BY PLURALISM OF VIEWPOINTS IN EVERY PUBLICISTIC⁵⁹ PROGRAMME ON POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SUBJECTS."

This declaration has played at least one very useful role for my research purposes: it forced BTV to take an institutional stand which offers a rare sample of corporate communication on the issues that I am investigating. Targeted by a high-profile list of accusations, including treason to national interest and alleged violation of the legal terms of its broadcasting license, BTV had to either drop the film from its programme and acknowledge that it had made a mistake, or defend it and back its claims. It chose the latter and the first episode of the sequel went on air on November 28, 2009. BTV's formal

⁵⁹ Here and elsewhere 'publicist' and 'publicistic' appear in direct translated quotes as generic terms used in Bulgarian for social and political journalism, popular commentaries, documentaries and essays.

response issued on the same day and quoted by DarikNews (2009b) began by denouncing the accusations against it of betraying the national interest by invoking the democratic function of mass media according to Fourth Estate theory (McQuail 2005):

For BTV, the national interest means the right of viewers to learn the truth – in this case the truth about the destruction of a national treasure, the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, in the name of short-term profit. The author of the film is seeking the perpetrators of the current state of the Sunny Beach [tourist] complex. She shows the scheme of its privatisation and the unchecked construction that accompanies it.

BTV statement from November 28, 2009, quoted by DarikNews (2009b)

This statement by BTV elevates public and collective interests above individual economic ones in two ways: first, by equating short term profit to a perpetrator's guilt in the destruction of common natural resources – a powerful message that far exceeds the tone and wording of the film; and second, by referring indirectly to the Fourth Estate theory and directly to the public's right to know and be informed by mass media. Further in its statement, BTV takes up the issues of editorial quality and professional integrity by defending the methods of the film's authors:

BTV considers the declaration a rude attempt to prevent us from broadcasting a journalistic investigation that has been created in

accordance with all rules and includes all viewpoints on the subject.

Crucially, BTV's statement bears no support for any critical reassessment of the market and economic values that dominate the post-socialist political, social, economic, and – as shown by its own documentary – physical landscapes of Bulgaria. In fact, the station firmly backs the dominant neoliberal discourse and reinforces the black and white 'transition theory' approach to post-socialism. By the end of its statement, BTV emphasises its loyalty to free market ideology by accusing the authors of the protest declaration of violating its rules:

Unlike the years of socialism, Bulgarian tourists [today] have a huge choice of resting places. Apparently the representatives of the tourist sector – particularly along the Black Sea coast – can already feel the withdrawal of tourists from their hotels. We are convinced that this is due not to BTV's journalistic investigation but to the quality of service offered by hotel and restaurant owners.

It is no surprise that a commercial television network, owned by the time by Murdoch's News Corporation, would be unwilling to challenge the neoliberal status quo. Quite on the contrary, it is remarkable that the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* documentary sequel has suggested such points in its coverage of Bulgaria's post-socialist seaside construction boom. At least part of the reason for this might be attributed to the business interest of

BTV's minority shareholder Krassimir Guergov (2012) in high-end golf course projects along the Black Sea, which present competition to the low-coast mass tourism business model of which Sunny Beach is the unchallenged champion. The existence of channels for asserting this interest across BTV's editorial hierarchy has been demonstrated already in Chapter 5. For the purpose of this chapter it is important to trace further the interrelations among environmental change, professional norms and the market and business imperative. So let me return to the three normative orders of journalism – professional, societal and business-related – as they transpire in the accounts of the film's author, who participated in my research. Due to the fact that she is well-known to the public and impossible to anonymise in this context, I obtained her informed consent and am using her real name for the purpose of this research.

The *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* documentary offers a clear example of journalism whereby the first and second orders of professional norms – which, according to Bennett, regulate journalists' professional performance and their societal responsibilities as guardians of public interest and democracy – seem to co-operate quite smoothly. Sensitivity to the need of nature protection and sharp awareness of environmental devastation seem to have worked as a powerful transmission for this co-operation. The film's author, journalist Genka Shikerova, confirmed that part of the reason to take on the Sunny Beach topic was personal and emotional, but she insists that this has not affected the quality of her professional performance as a journalist.⁶⁰ In her account, her interest in the topic emerged almost accidentally, some 4-5 years earlier, while she was on a personal trip to the coastal city of Nessebar, whose municipal authority covers Sunny Beach, and encountered a hotel that was built straight across a street. This made her "amazed" and "enraged" on a personal level, with her reaction rooted in a deeper affection for wild nature that she thinks defines her individual personality:

⁶⁰ Interview with Genka Shikerova, December 12, 2009.

(...) Because of my way of thinking, I suffer for every cut tree and this is something deeply ingrained, it has nothing to do with journalism or reporting, or anything. (...)I love nature. I know that my lifetime would hardly be enough for a tree to get taller than I am. For that reason, it hurts me when trees are cut down. I don't know how to explain it. Yes, I have planted pine trees. I simply love nature and that is why it hurts me.

Interview with Genka Shikerova, December 12, 2009

Based on her personal resentment of the obvious violation of nature protection and urban development regulations, Shikerova has begun exploring the permission practices of the municipality. Over time she unearthed evidence of unlawful activities, corruption and conflict of interest, which linked municipal officials, builders, state authorities, enforcement officers and members of the judiciary. All these found a place in her documentary sequel later on, making it a story of bad governance and neglect of the common good by corrupt officials, some of whom had been democratically elected. Finally, she made an attempt to add to the picture the top level – the top political leaders who made the legislative and government decisions that enabled the rogue land use, planning, and construction practices along the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria. Shikerova worked in accordance to Fourth Estate theory and complied with the order of societal and democratic norms of journalism.

From Shikerova's own account it appears that she has had a sort of a personal quest against what she perceived as bad practices in the Nessebar municipality, which involved a court case against the mayor for his refusal to disclose information about his and his subordinate's actions in the case of Sunny Beach. She also acknowledges that she has been

involved in personal confrontations of similar kind against authorities and corporations who destroy the natural environment on at least one other occasion. But, having described the importance of her personal motives, Shikerova tries to draw a clear line between them and her professional work as a journalist. In what appears to be an attempt to obey the 'moral and emotional detachment from topics and subjects of news' imposed by the contemporary discourse of journalistic professionalism (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p.559), she gives factual accuracy the status of a professional credo: "I don't have personal causes in my materials; I do not defend anything that is personal; I simply search for the facts." Demonstrating full confidence in the flawlessness of her work ("that is why there is no weak spot in the features I make") Shikerova believes that in the case of *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach*: "there were protests by the hotel and restaurant owners, etc. but at the end of the day they said that the facts are as they were presented by us". She then dismisses the attack against her documentary as motivated by the financial interests of those who "collect the gains" from what has happened in Sunny Beach and elsewhere: "Their problem is that this has an impact on their business, which is not my problem," she concludes.

Shikerova expresses satisfaction with the large-scale support and positive feedback, received by *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach*. But she is keen to point out that she does not belong or wish to be associated with any environmentalist movements or groups. She offers a very carefully constructed identification of her relationship to nature and environment protection, whereby she prioritizes the individual attitude and action over collective effort:

I am not some psycho ecologist. There are people who have commercialised this topic and abuse it. I am totally against this extreme. I am for an appropriate attitude towards the world that

surrounds us. Appropriate in my understanding, of course, I don't know how appropriate it is in others' eyes. (...) I do the things I consider normal in my understanding, starting from putting your waste in the waste bin, and if there is not one, keeping it in your pocket, to the extent that I have rebuked people for doing just the opposite.

Interview with Genka Shikerova from December 12, 2009

Shikerova's attitude is not unique: other journalist participants in this research have expressed preference for individual approaches to protect nature or to achieve social change for more nature-friendly living and lifestyles too.⁶¹ Maintaining a safe distance from collective efforts in the same direction appears to be a more or less commonly shared standard among journalists, which fits well within their understanding of neutrality and objectivity as part of the professional set of journalistic norms to obey.

This standard has been justified by BTV's head of news as a way to prevent viewers from getting the sense that they are being brainwashed.⁶²

Such precautionary editorial attitudes are in sharp contrast with the tendencies demonstrated in corporate engagement with various charitable or other campaigns. As part of these, prominent television journalists and screen celebrities initiate and lead campaigns on charitable causes, using their television channels as the platform. BTV has been a leader in this respect,⁶³ with various news presenters and other popular screen faces initiating campaigns around aid for the Haiti earthquake victims (BTV 2010a), assisting orphans and orphanages, and more recently – the high-profile campaign “Let's clean up Bulgaria” (BTV 2011a). The station's corporate responsibility website lists nine “large-scale

⁶¹ Interviews A0086 and A088-0089 from December 9, 2009, A0122-0123 from August 12, 2010 among others.

⁶² Interview C0110-0111-0112 from May 3, 2010.

⁶³ Interview A0128 from November 10, 2010.

campaigns organised by BTV” since 2005 (BTV 2011b), and over 90 campaigns that have been “supported by BTV” since 2008 (BTV 2011c). Among the latter, there have been a dozen environmental campaigns, most of which organized by international organisation WWF. A Hopenhagen campaign by the UN and the International Advertising Agency devoted to the 2009 Climate Change summit in Copenhagen is also featured (BTV 2009). Support for these initiatives is one of the components of BTV’s “environmentally-friendly business practices”, a description of which is also provided as part of the media’s corporate responsibility section (BTV 2011d). Other practices listed include an annual tree planting performed by the station’s team, energy-saving features of BTV’s equipment and facilities, separate waste collection and recycling, the participation of “some of BTV’s most favourite faces” in environmental initiatives on their personal time, and rewards received by BTV’s reporters and producers. The last item is in fact the only hint of any relation between nature protection and the editorial production of BTV, and there is no mention of any editorial policy or commitment to environmentalist values.

As it seems, a system of professional norms applies in BTV that strictly discourages journalists from engaging with and acting upon causes of collective interest of their own liking, while at the same time enabling corporate involvement with charitable causes based on the choice of the management and marketing team of the station. Apparently BTV is making a conscious effort to build a corporate image of a socially- and environmentally-concerned mass medium – a goal confirmed by senior management and editorial figures who took part in my research⁶⁴. But this goal does not seem to involve to a major extent the company’s core business – the production of television programming – and even less its news and editorial content, with a few notable exceptions like *Concrete Gardens* – *Sunny Beach*. While aspiring to leadership as a news provider, BTV’s editorial and management structures seem to encourage the advance of individualism and impose

⁶⁴ Interviews C0110-0111-0112 from May 3, 2010 and A0128 from November 10, 2010.

celebrity culture – with all of its problematic consequences (Boykoff and Goodman 2009) – and corporate business values on the news team members. These values gradually replace the genuine professional engagement of journalists with environmental problems upon their own judgment – which would involve greater exposure of these problems in the editorial product and intense investigation of their reasons and consequences. In fact the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* documentary offers a clear example of the immense potential and power of such genuine engagement. But instead of seeking synergies, journalists tend to be suspicious to collective environmental or social movements and initiatives originating from the public. At the same time corporate campaigns prevail, designed and implemented to promote the corporate brand and green image of BTV rather than resolve any environmental problems or question the social and economic paradigms that cause them. Even where BTV supports external campaigns, these are mostly linked to or held by established mainstream players, such as international NGOs, UN agencies, state-sponsored quasi-NGOs (e.g. the Red Cross), or business associations, none of which is likely to challenge the market- and economy-driven neoliberal status-quo. All these developments fit into the description of neoliberalisation of the public sphere and the loss of ‘voice’ associated with it by Couldry (2010).

6.3. The Climate Change Summit in Copenhagen.

Climate change is one of the thematic areas in which concerns over the deterioration of a global common resource such as climate collide with economic interests that rely on the exploitation of natural resources to generate profits. For more than a decade journalists’ performance in this zone of collision and the way in which it affects norms and practices of journalism has enjoyed substantial scholarly attention (among others: Boykoff and Boykoff 2004, Carvalho and Burgess 2005, Smith 2005, Boykoff 2011). All this has

directed my attention to the professional and individual aspects of engagement with climate change as they emerged in my field research in Bulgarian newsrooms during 2009 – 2010. I have been keen to understand journalists' attitudes and levels of engagement with a global environmental issue like climate change in comparison to local ones, such as the destruction of wildlife by construction and other business interests. How professional norms of journalism apply in the field of climate change has been of particular interest for me in the light of substantial scholarly evidence of tensions around norms of balance, novelty, authority order, and journalists' responsibility to safeguard the public's interest and provide a research-based representation of climate science (Smith 2000, Boykoff and Boykoff 2007, Carvalho 2007). Mass media portrayals of climate change in the USA, UK and elsewhere in the West have been shown to not convey sound scientific information about climate change to their audiences, thus hampering their ability to participate in political decision making processes or effectively control the actions of their elected representatives (Boykoff 2011) – in clear contradiction with Fourth Estate theory and the supposed societal and democratic functions of the press. All this has suggested a role for vested economic interests in the shaping of journalistic norms and the way in which they are being applied in practice in Bulgaria's post-socialist circumstances.

I have had a suitable opportunity to observe Bulgarian journalists' engagement with climate change in the period before, during and after the Copenhagen climate summit: the United Nations Climate Change Conference that took place on December 7 – 18, 2009 in the Danish capital. The conference consisted of the 15th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the 5th Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, and myriad parallel policy, scientific and activist events devoted to climate change. A framework for climate change mitigation beyond 2012 was among the expected policy outcomes from the summit. After intense intergovernmental negotiations,

the summit produced the so-called Copenhagen Accord, a non-legally-binding document which recognizes climate change as one of the greatest challenges of the present day and acknowledges that actions should be taken to keep any temperature increases to below 2 °C (UNFCCC 2009). The summit enjoyed record media interest: it was covered by 4,000 journalists from 119 countries (Painter 2010). Among them both BTV (Nikolova 2009) and *Capital* (Georgiev 2009) had special correspondents, and one of them participated in my research.

My primary interest was in the developments in newsrooms and editorial meetings in Bulgaria, where journalists and editors alike have been trying to make sense of the great international news event that Copenhagen turned out to be. One hypothesis that I sought to check during my field study work has been that the debate over climate change inevitably invites critical reassessment of the world's economic model and journalists will need to deal with them in their coverage of Copenhagen. So I expected that at least some journalists will question the domination of market and economic priorities over collective interest and public good, which appear to be under threat by global climate change. This has generally proved wrong and I have encountered very little evidence of critical media and public debate over the supremacy of market and economic considerations, its consequences on the environment and any possible alternatives. The briefest explanation for this has been by one of *Capital's* founders, a journalist, economist by education and successful businessman, who still participated in editorial matters at the time of my research: "We have not grown up to that level of thinking."⁶⁵ But there is more to *Capital's* approach to climate change that explains the lack of critical assessment of neoliberal economic values by the newspaper. Although the paper's editor-in-chief states that she personally finds the thesis of the anthropogenic causes of climate change well justified, she points at certain controversies between *Capital's* editorial ideology and some

⁶⁵ Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010.

of the solutions to global climate change discussed in Copenhagen, which are “totally against our vision”⁶⁶. These solutions, according to the research participant, involve altering certain segments of the economy by subsidies or regulatory means, making political decisions to move from one type of economy to another, and suggesting a 20-year-plan for Bulgaria’s government to achieve this transfer. According to *Capital*’s most senior editorial decision-maker, all this is “opposed to our idea that things should happen in a more liberal mode and not be planning-oriented.” This formulation suggests that *Capital*’s editorial line is influenced in favour of views that support indiscriminate economic liberalism against any attempt of state regulation of the functioning of the free market, which are typically neoliberal (Harvey 2005). Setting an example of the transfer of these views from Western journalism into Bulgaria’s post-socialist realities, the editor-in-chief of *Capital* uses as a reference point editorials of New York Times columnist and three-time Pulitzer Prize winner Thomas Friedman, who has defended unlimited economic globalisation and free trade in his works (Friedman 1999, 2005).

Sitting at BTV news team editorial meetings at the time of Copenhagen, I observed that in most of the cases when global warming or climate change would get mentioned some journalists burst into laughter⁶⁷. Puzzled, I asked research participants for their explanation of this strange reoccurrence, but the only one I received by a journalist was that her colleagues “are not really into this topic.”⁶⁸ She then went on to remind me of an episode that happened during the first editorial meeting that I attended as a participant observant. Back then, after introducing me and asking me to present my project, the head of the news spoke about the importance of environmental stories and called upon the international news editors to follow them more carefully, providing as an example a story about invasive

⁶⁶ Interview C0109 from May 3, 2010.

⁶⁷ Field notes F0299 from December 10, 2009.

⁶⁸ Interview A0088-0089 from December 10, 2009.

jellyfish. I had recorded this episode as evidence of reflexive interference of my presence onto the research field. But to illustrate the attitude of her colleagues to global environmental stories, the participant reminded me of the reaction of the chief international editor, which I had missed in my field notes:

... Then the international editor said, 'Yes, but we did not pay attention to the serious topics (...) I think this is the kind of attitude...

Interview A0088-0089 from December 10, 2009

It appears that unlike nature protection, deforestation, water pollution or other environmental issues that affect the life of local communities, climate change has remained very much a low-priority foreign-pages issue from the mainstream news-maker's perspective. For about a decade their primary avenue for local engagement with it has been through the weather forecast or extreme weather news reports, which will be discussed in one of the following chapters. At the same time climate change has gained prominence in Bulgaria mostly as a foreign issue – a trend that has not been significantly interrupted by the comparatively recent increase in policy interest to the issue since Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007. So one possible reason for the failure of Copenhagen to trigger in Bulgaria the critical media debate I had expected it to was the sheer fact that it inherited and maintained the foreign event framing that it already had obtained. As BTV's environmental reporter explains:

(...) When people talk about Copenhagen, this is all very abstract: some old guys get together and decide about very important things that will start happening in 2012, so what? All this is happening outside of the people's reality. That's why today colleagues were joking during the debriefing session

about some crazy people who are going on their bikes or on buses (...) to remind that this concerns everybody.

Interview A0086 from December 9, 2009

And yet, Copenhagen has enjoyed relatively intensive coverage and commentary on the pages and screens of Bulgarian mass media. Among them both BTV and *Capital* (with *Dnevnik*) have devoted substantial air time and page-space to it respectively: they have meticulously reported on all the facts surrounding the conference itself in their news coverage of the conference, and illuminated what was discussed there in thematic features. Here is the perception of climate change as a reporting topic, offered by one of BTV's international news editors, who has been in charge of a number of stories regarding Copenhagen:

[Climate change] stands out as an important problem of a curious nature. Usually it is about exotic places, exotic terms... the whole issue has very exotic character...or a concrete, very serious, invisible problem that is supposed to strike us in some visible way.

Interview E0105 from May 1, 2010

“Important” but “exotic,” the issue of climate change and its anthropogenic character remains unclear – or “still unfolding” – according to the BTV news editor who covered the Copenhagen summit. His somewhat confused understanding of the scientific controversy around climate is worth a brief review:

(...)The climate doesn't change in the course of a human life. It is very hard to see a big change. I remember some winters when I was young the snow in the street was 2-3 meters deep, we got together to clean the whole street. In recent times the winters have been very soft, which worries me a lot, because I am a keen snowboarder. But here – the last winter overwhelmed us with snow. What if the next one is also like this? And the one after that? What will be the basis of those theories? The Earth has been turning for far longer than the 100-200 years for which we have a database. That's why I am rather sceptical about the issue [of climate change], but that doesn't prevent me from covering it objectively, meaning that when there is some development, we mention it and I try to convince myself that this is the way things are happening.

Interview E0105 from May 1, 2010

Somewhere within this fascinating amalgam of personal experiences and mixed-up references to climate change denial claims lies the genuine curiosity of a young journalist as to what has actually been going on in Copenhagen. It shows the level of understanding of the issues and processes that happened there – or, rather, the lack of it – that has been offered to the audience of Bulgaria's most popular television channel. In the prism of this project's theoretical framework, it indicates a deficit of analytical capacity and expert opinion that effectively prevents both the journalist and their audience from understanding the importance of climate change, arriving to any serious dilemmas over the collision between common goods and private or corporate economic interest, and consecutively – taking any action upon these dilemmas. A graduate from the Journalism Department at

Sofia University, this young editor demonstrates somewhat blurred understanding of what journalism is: on the one hand it is the “honourable profession” of his parents, which he associates with the smell of freshly printed newspaper on the breakfast table and truly adores; but on the other it is something, different, larger than what he is currently doing – which is no more than “just making news.”

In contrast, Lyuben, *Capital*'s chief writer on climate change, is a much more experienced member of the editorial staff. His academic background is in economics and as part of his Masters' thesis he compared the coverage of climate change by the BBC and Reuters to that of Bulgarian media. Unfortunately his research is not available to me, but in his interview he gladly shared his observations of the way the Bulgarian media portrays climate change:

Newsrooms have a steady interest in this issue for the past 2-3 years, since Al Gore's film [*An Inconvenient Truth*]. [Prior to that] they thought that this issue could not be sold. [But] when REUTERS began packaging it differently, with images of glaciers, with the stories about the polar bears, that's when media started selling it here. They started researching; they paid social researchers to figure out what people think about climate change, they started looking around. That's when the rise of the other media took place – blogs, etc., in which this issue was discussed a lot more. [The press] took a lot of ideas from there. (...) Even now there are no people in the newsrooms who deal with this issue. Most of the reporters who deal with climate change are the people who follow the beat of the Ministry of Environment and Waters, which is a different thing.

This insiders' observation reinforces the questions around the editorial logic around the subject of climate change, which prevents newsrooms from attracting the necessary expertise and capacity to properly deal with it. Of course, Lyuben rightly thinks of himself – and his employer *Capital* – as an exception from this observation. As one of the few Bulgarian journalists who actually attended the Copenhagen summit in person (and the only one among my research participants) he is confident in his understanding of what was at stake, and what actually happened in Copenhagen. *Capital's* correspondent refers to the conference as “a Babylon” and “chaos” but still denies that it was a failure:

When I wrote the feature, on the evening before Friday, [December 18, 2009] everybody was convinced that there would be no document, nobody could see it coming... Suddenly [US President] Obama came and gathered people together around the table and said “Let's sign it”. This is a case of re-shaping the world order. The EU was completely excluded from this meeting. (...) Everybody expected a miracle. No way. That was a great triumph of realism – which everybody later called a 'failure'.

Interview C0106 from May 3, 2010

Where the underlying issues that determine the balance between environmental and economic interest are concerned, Lyuben is a neat match for his paper's economic profile and market-oriented values: an economist, interpreting climate change and Copenhagen in primarily economic terms. Like his chief editor, he is fascinated by the views of Friedman, whom he had the pleasure of meeting in person in Copenhagen's media room. Prior to the

summit he and his colleagues undertook profound analysis of the economic implications of climate change and the possible solution scenarios discussed at Copenhagen and published it as a cover story in the week of the summit. As one of the authors of this analysis, Lyuben found Bulgaria's delegation inadequately prepared to face the challenges and dynamics of the summit. In his view it was a mistake for Bulgaria to send its minister of environment to Copenhagen:

(...) the main driving force of this, of course, should be the Ministry of Economics, it should assess what the effect would be on the Bulgarian economy, what should be done, etc. The Ministry of Environment is the additional factor...

Interview C0106 from May 3, 2010

Lyuben's unfavourable attitude to environmentalist perspectives is not limited to policy analysis or international negotiations. Lyuben dismisses environmentalism and nature protection causes as "ridiculous:"

There is no way to attract people with [a cause like] "Let's save the trees of Vitosha". The cause I like a lot more is the fact that one can make this country a lot more developed, that is my personal cause. Forget those trees in Vitosha, Europe will save the trees in Europe, that is not the problem. EU is a powerful enough organisation to enforce those rules. But EU won't push one forward, unless one pushes oneself.

All in all, *Capital's* thematic writer on climate change appears to be much better qualified to comprehend and report analytically on the issue's complexity, but he also tends to possess a very limited, one-sided perspective. His perspective gives top priority to economic and market considerations over environmentalist, health-related, or social aspects of climate change, which makes it seem essentially neoliberal. In this regard his views seem to coincide with the ones of his younger colleague from BTV, who described Copenhagen thus:

Too much emotion, too little results, and a sense of being doomed from the very start. The emotion of the people who want to change something by turning off their lamps for an hour during the Earth Hour, thinking that they are making a difference in this way. Next, there are those who go to fight with the police because they are to blame for global warming, and they trash an entire town in order to achieve their demands, which are absurd. Leaders, who must take very difficult financial decisions for their countries, in the name of some benefit that is not confirmed by facts or scientists, and is confirmed by others, are harming those people who in such a difficult crisis might rise against the ruling authority. This issue is very important and the world is not mature enough to consider it in this way.

Interview E0105 from May 1, 2010

These views are important, because unlike *Capital*, BTV's editorial policy over climate change does not seem to bear any ideological stamp. It is rather left to the understanding

and interpretation of individual journalists, which varies significantly sometimes. Vera, a chief editorial executive at the television channel, explains BTV's editorial attitude to climate change as based exclusively on several basic news reporting norms of the first order: it has to be linked to some news event, be exciting for the audience, and well explained. Compared to most other research participants, Vera seems to demonstrate relatively high confidence in environmental NGOs and protest groups, and even gives them credit for whistle-blowing and their stubborn perseverance in accomplishing their desired policy or governance changes:

NGOs who deal with all kinds of environmental problems are extremely strong – as civil society and civil presence. Because they get easily organised, they protest, people still view them as the rare birds – some people who have recognised there is a problem. I notice that they react extremely fast and absolutely adequately to every change they do not like. This deserves respect, because, regardless of their efforts, protests, petitions and direct letters to Brussels, many times the problems do not get solved immediately – but there is a cumulative effect. Sooner or later, a letter by the European Commission arrives which says that a certain case has been brought by some environmental organisation. This means that those people's efforts, no matter how weird they look, do not remain unnoticed.

Interview C0110-0111-0112 from May 3, 2010

6.4. Conclusions.

In the case of the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* documentary, broadcast by BTV in November 2009, personal interest in a national environmental problem, combined with rigorous investigation of facts and developments locally and nationally, has resulted in a fine sample of investigative journalism. It has – perhaps unintentionally – posed serious critical questions about the impact of neoliberal market and business imperatives on social and common interests. Strictly following her understanding of first order professional norms of journalism, the author has defended collective public interest and has revealed rogue practices and corruption of democratically elected officials, state and municipal administration, enforcement and planning officers, thus complying with the second order – of societal norms that relate to Fourth Estate theory. Applying rigorous reporting, feature writing and documentary film techniques such as interview quotes from different actors; representing all sides around the investigated problem; strict reporting of facts, figures and their sources; and use of documentary and archive imagery can result in a quality journalistic product. Without much commentary or direct analysis, such a product can challenge established orthodoxies, such as the domination of market and economic interest over common good or the schematic representation of post-socialist reality as a linear ‘transition.’ But journalists need to be persistent and possess substantial commitment to be able to produce a quality investigation. The author of the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* has had to go through a court case to obtain the necessary information from a local municipality. There is significant resistance against this type of journalism: social actors representing the interests of those who benefit from the devastation of nature and violation of planning regulations have undertaken a unified attempt to prevent the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* documentary from going on air. Apart from providing macro-economic and patriotic arguments to justify the wrong-doings revealed by the journalistic investigation, the proponents of uncontained business initiatives are inclined to apply direct pressure on

media decision makers to protect their interests. The channels used to deliver such pressure, as revealed by the case, include: the political leadership of the country; the administrative and regulatory bodies of the state; and the business and management structures of the mass media organisations. In a rare stand BTV defended its editorial integrity and took a stand defending its journalists in this case, but it is indicative of the sort of pressure that is applied on journalists whose work questions the established neoliberal discourse in post-socialist societies. In the case of the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* where this has happened, consecutive corporate communication has made it clear that it does not tolerate any critical reassessment of the dominant neoliberal and transition discourses.

In contrast to the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* case, no in-depth debate over the economic and political paradigms that lead to adverse environmental and climate change has been possible over the story of Copenhagen. The UN summit in December 2009 has been the focal point of international policy discussions that were expected to deliver lasting solutions to climate change. But no crucial questions were raised by the journalists covering the summit for BTV and *Capital*. The reasons for such refusal of critical debate identified in Bulgarian newsrooms include lack of adequate understanding of the gravity of climate change problems by journalists, and purposeful prioritisation of economic and business perspectives to these problems where such understanding exists. In one of the studied newsrooms – that of *Capital* – there has been evidence of a consciously pursued editorial line in favour of economic liberalism and against attempted regulatory measure that could limit market freedom. At BTV there has been no evidence of such an editorial line, but issues of collective social importance like climate tend to be interpreted only in terms of day-to-day news coverage of events, actions and developments, leaving little space for analytical or critical perspectives. The latter confirms Bourdieu's (1998a) arguments about television technology being a primary vehicle of neoliberal values.

In both cases a problematic trend has been identified in terms of journalists' attitudes to environmental campaigners or active citizens who undertake public actions to accomplish environmental or social change. Journalists, in the context studied, tend to prioritize individualistic approaches, such as lifestyle change, over collective action, even where they sympathise with its goals. Journalists' detachment from civil society actions is discouraged under the guise of the journalistic neutrality norm. At the same time corporate commutations of mass media organisations like BTV employ celebrity culture increasingly for launching and supporting their own charitable campaigns of its own liking. In this way a mixture of individualistic and corporate profit values displace genuine voices that represent collective interests, while professional norms relating to journalistic practice prevent journalists from supporting such voices and giving them prominence. This observation offers a strong argument in support of Couldry's (2010) analysis whereby journalistic practices assist a neoliberal hegemony in its suppression of 'voice.'

CHAPTER SEVEN

Tobacco control and citizens' participation

7.1. Introduction.

This chapter offers another empirical case study, taking a specific route to examine journalists' decisions and motivations as gatekeepers of plurality and democratic values in society, conceptualised here as 'voice' and 'dialogue'. The chapter's function is to develop an understanding of journalistic practices relating to the environment specifically in Bulgaria, by introducing the development of a peculiarly Bulgarian environmental health story.

To achieve this, the chapter explores the case of a civic initiative around an issue of collective health and social importance: tobacco smoking. In the spring of 2010 citizens gathered in Bulgaria's capital Sofia to oppose the intention of several Members of Parliament (MPs) from the ruling majority to cancel a complete ban on tobacco smoking. The ban had been part of the country's Health Act since 2009 and had been scheduled to enter into force on 1 June, 2010. In the almost complete absence of effective public participation mechanisms, the mass media offered a channel for citizens' arguments in favour of the ban to reach those in power and potentially influence their decisions. The campaign group and the campaign were entitled 'България без дим' ('Smoke-Free Bulgaria') and I took active part in both of them.

Since journalists' judgements underpin the extent and ways in which mass media represent citizen voices, understanding the circumstances and justifications that lead to journalists' actions is important as part of an analysis of the ways in which citizens' voices are heard and acted upon by government in Bulgaria's post-socialist society. Based on the perspective of a journalism practitioner equipped with a set of social research methods, this chapter offers an account of journalists' engagement with citizens' demands for participation in the shaping and enforcement of legislation around an environmental and health issue of collective interest.

The aim of the chapter is to enhance the understanding of journalists' professional and personal responses to citizens' aspirations for effective participation in governmental decision-making on issues of environmental issues. In order to do so, the chapter examines how journalists perceive and define their own professional and personal roles and reactions vis-à-vis a spontaneous civic campaign aimed at preventing a planned decision of the government in post-socialist Bulgaria to liberalise tobacco control policies. The chapter reports collected data and provides analysis in response to the research question of the thesis: how do journalists balance their commitments to public interest and economic and market pressure on their work when covering issues of collective interest. With its direct relevance to environmental health tobacco smoking is one such issue. But unlike climate change, it is much more clearly laid out on national scale, thanks partially to the controversy around the complete ban on smoking and the civic response to it. By introducing the development of a peculiarly Bulgarian environmental health story it enriches the understanding of journalistic practices relating to the environment specifically in Bulgaria.

Journalists' practices of engagement with citizen campaigning in relation to government anti-smoking policy are a highly relevant topic for analysis from the perspective of public participation in science communication. It is important because policymaking about smoking generates broad public debate and requires collective action to facilitate effective public participation in the government's decision-making. Through the empirical study, the chapter contributes to the thesis' exploration of practices of articulation, marginalisation and silencing of citizen voices in different social, political and media contexts.

The chapter will begin by conceptualizing public participation as the meeting point of 'voice' and 'dialogue', linking it to the analytical framework of this research project. It will discuss the concepts of 'dialogue' and 'voice' in the context of public participation in tobacco control legislation and the role played here by journalists in mainstream mass media. Further, I will delve into some notions of professionalism in journalism and journalistic norms, which have been empirically tested in the course of my fieldwork. After describing the specifics of the chosen case and the way in which I have applied the research methods and theoretical framework of this research project on it, I will present the chapter's main findings and conclusions.

7.2. Participation, dialogue and voice.

In order to analyse how journalists perceive and define their own professional and personal roles and obligations in a spontaneous civic campaign about environmental health, this chapter links public participation to the practice and identity development of journalists: the dialogic turn in communication, science and technology studies, conceptualised recently by Phillips (2011); and Nick Couldry's (2010) conception of 'voice' as a process of social empowerment. In a report published in August 2011, the World Health

Organisation (WHO) confirmed that the involvement and cooperation of citizens, consumers and patients has become essential for good health-related governance and decision-making (WHO-Europe 2011). By suggesting that it is becoming increasingly difficult for governments to make good health and environment-related policy decisions without engaging with the public, the UN's health policy body seems to side with a scholarly view that prioritises the normative democratic aspects of public participation (e.g. Coenen 2009, Fischer 2009). Here, governance is viewed as a field in which government and other societal actors collaborate in communication processes designed to lead to collectively binding decisions (Felt and Fochler 2010). The spread of this form of governance can be understood as part of a dialogic turn in which communication is conceived not as a one-way flow of knowledge but as a dialogue among participants where knowledge is co-produced collaboratively (Smith 2005). Among the different stakeholders whose voices are expected to be articulated in the dialogic process of public participation, journalists are of particular relevance as gatekeepers in relation to the presence in mainstream mass media of the collective voices of the public. In comparison, the access of authorities and political decision-makers to mass media coverage is traditionally institutionalised through the system of beats and government press offices, while the interests of the business sectors are increasingly well-protected as well (Bennett 2002).

The seemingly underprivileged position of collective and public voices in the process of 'dialogue', as far as mass media are concerned, invites the further conceptualisation of 'voice' as a collective value that goes beyond the views or voices of particular groups and enables greater diversity and social cooperation (Couldry 2010). Voice in this sense is a process that is closely linked to pluralism, diversity and liberal democracy – and to the process of 'dialogue' – as opposed to a dominant market and economy-related neoliberal discourse, which heavily circumscribes collective participation in participatory forms of democratic activity. Public participation offers a fascinating meeting point of the two

concepts, which provides an extra dimension to each of them: a stronger sense of participation, understood as interactivity, interdependence and reflexivity in the process of 'voice'; and emancipated prominence of collective public voices in relation to those of other stakeholders, such as government or business, in the process of 'dialogue'. From the perspective of public participation, it is then important to analyse the extent to which journalists open up for dialogue, and tolerate 'voice' in general, and the articulation of civic voices in mainstream media pages and news broadcasts in particular.

To understand the professional judgements and actions of journalists that enable or disable 'dialogue' and 'voice', a closer look at the notion of journalistic professionalism is required. The normative principle underpinning journalism within the terms of the 'Fourth Estate' theory of democracy is that the free press should act as the watchdog, guardian or voice of citizens (McQuail 2005). But the social and democratic responsibility function of journalism has always been counterbalanced persistently by demands of media owners that journalism should reflect and serve their interests (Carr-Saunders and Wilson 1933, quoted by Albridge and Evetts 2003, McQuail 2005). As discussed in Chapter 2, an Anglo-American model of journalism pervades contemporary western media systems, which is dominated by market ideas and commercialism (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Within it a discourse of journalistic professionalism has been constructed and utilised by managers in news organisations, by journalists themselves and by the public as well (Aldridge and Evetts 2003). Employing mechanisms of occupational socialisation and identity formation within the professional community, this discourse introduces effective self-discipline and control of journalists' working practice (Fournier 1999). This is how it works: first, the parameters of what should be considered professionally acceptable are set and imposed on journalists both by means of training and education, and by in-house organisational controls; then journalists impose these parameters on each other as part of professional socialisation, and struggle to comply with them in order to maintain their professional self-

identity. The discourse of professionalism is linked to the spread of market and economic values as part of a neoliberal discourse across social fields including the mass media and journalism (Bourdieu 1998a, Harvey 2005, Couldry 2010). Its consequences include, among others, the entrenching of individualism and increased denial of collective and social values by journalists (Aldridge and Evetts 2003).

7.3. BezDim: Campaigning for a smoking ban.

The case description below presents an account of the events, developments and actions that led to the postponement of the smoking ban in closed public spaces in Bulgaria, focusing on the aspirations of a spontaneous collective movement to participate in a pending governmental decision on the ban's cancellation. This description builds upon research field notes, some relevant scholarly sources and news reports from the broadcast media and the press that could be accessed online.

A total ban on smoking in closed public spaces had been adopted by Bulgaria's Parliament in 2009, as part of a new Health Act scheduled to come in effect from 1 June 2010. A new parliamentary majority cancelled the ban in May 2010 and replaced it with a partial ban. Driven by ruling majority MPs with reported vested interests in the tobacco trade (Mediapool 2010), the ban's cancellation has been backed by the government of Gerb, the centre-right political party founded and led by Prime Minister Boyko Borissov (Konstantinov 2010, Yordanova and Simeonova 2010).

The ban's cancellation reflected inherent political and ethnic tensions relating to Bulgaria's outdated tobacco farming industry and state-owned monopolist Bulgartabak. Tobacco growing and processing in Bulgaria is concentrated largely in areas inhabited by Muslims,

a minority that had experienced government oppression and forced expulsion during the 1980s. As a result, its participation in Bulgaria's post-1989 pluralist democratic system has been channelled predominantly through a single political party – Движение за права и свободи (Movement for Rights and Freedoms, MRF), whose leadership is concentrated around Ahmed Dogan (Creed 1995, Todorova 1998, Anagnostou 2005).

The announced intention of ruling majority MPs to propose the cancellation of the smoking ban by the Parliament triggered a massive outcry in the social media during February–May 2010. Several Facebook groups in support of the ban gathered over 5,000 followers. On the morning of 19 February 2010, a small group of protesters appeared at the gates of Bulgaria's Parliament and arranged the burning of cigarettes alongside the staircase.⁶⁹ The protest was titled 'Smoke for the MPs' and was meant to symbolise citizen resistance to the non-transparent way in which tobacco industry lobbyists were attempting to cancel the smoking ban.

In spite of the small number of participants – about a dozen – the action attracted media coverage, which linked it to the much greater number of critical voices online (BTV 2010b). This gave impetus and much-desired legitimacy to the offline protesters, so they soon grew in number and range of ideas. They formed an online steering group under the name България без дим (Smoke-Free Bulgaria) and launched a website at www.bezdim.org. The name, BezDim – or Smoke-Free – was established as the generic title of the group and the campaign.

Chief communicators among the ban's opponents included MPs from the ruling majority, Prime Minister Borissov himself, hospitality industry representatives and opinion leaders from the entertainment sector (Simeonova and Yordanova 2010). A few clusters of citizens

⁶⁹ Source: Field notes H0001 from February 19, 2010.

favouring the cancellation of the ban emerged, primarily online, but in spite of the relatively large number of smokers in Bulgaria, their activities were comparatively insignificant. The composition of the BezDim group of campaigners was quite different. BezDim has not been the typical activist group or NGO, as few of the core group members (apart from me) had had any substantial experience with social movements or non-profit fundraising. While people of various social backgrounds participated in the BezDim street demonstrations, the majority of the core group members had higher education and stable incomes above the average. Group members were from a wide range of professional backgrounds and many had the ability to decide on their time, which gave the campaign vitality and financial backing from voluntary donations.⁷⁰ Few celebrities and popular opinion leaders took part in the campaign's events, and the participation of well-known political figures in the group was deliberately discouraged for fear of politicising, and hence weakening, the groups' position.

Facebook and e-mail have been the primary communication environments of the initiative. Its access to the mainstream media was far from easy. The BezDim initiative therefore had to be proactive and creative in securing traditional mass media channels to communicate its messages so that they could reach and influence the political decision-makers. In an attempt to boost its outreach and capacity, BezDim sought contact with existing NGOs and other civil society actors. As a result, in April 2010 the Smoke-Free Life Coalition was formed as an informal entity that was open to existing groups, NGOs and any other organisations that shared two goals: to have the total smoking ban reinstated; and to ensure the enforcement of tobacco control legislation in Bulgaria (BezDim 2010b). The primary strengths of BezDim remained rooted in its non-hierarchical, very open profile, which encouraged – with the help of the Internet – the unlimited participation of any individual

⁷⁰ In addition to my research field notes, statements and articles that have been posted on the campaign's website at www.bezdim.org were used to document BezDim and its communication practices.

members of the public who wanted to voice support for the smoking ban and prevent political decision-makers from cancelling it. This profile has remained unchanged throughout the period of research.

The communication messages of the group were shaped by on-going discussions, mostly online, among members and followers of the initiative. As a campaign that had emerged in response to intended policy decisions, BezDim has had to constantly reflect upon, and respond to, the messages of the opponents of the ban. A deliberate, proactive attempt was made by the BezDim members to reframe the public and media debate (BezDim 2010a, BezDim 2010b) with an emphasis on:

- revealing the role of the tobacco industry and trade (including illegal) as the true beneficiaries of the smoking ban's cancellation;
- portraying the ban's reversal as a backward policy move that contradicts the country's commitments to the EU and the WHO;
- portraying the complete smoking ban as an achievement and a step towards improving the wellbeing and lifestyle of Bulgarians; and
- highlighting the health and social arguments in favour of a complete smoking ban, particularly with regard to young people and children.

Most of the initiative's actions between March and May 2010 were designed to communicate these messages.⁷¹ Pro-ban campaigners rallied in greater numbers on the streets of Sofia, challenged Borissov to a public health-jogging session held in one of the capital's parks, marched backwards in front of Parliament to show that a reversal of the ban was a backward step, and even sneaked into Parliament to demonstrate on the gallery during the first reading of the Health Act's amendments. The creativity and level of

⁷¹ Field notes H0037 from March 31, 2010.

participation of these actions earned them press coverage and positioned the smoking ban high on the public agenda, and made it possible for the campaigners to voice their messages, and challenge the arguments of the ban's opponents. Following a last creative protest rally outside the houses of the parliament (Iliev 2010), the smoking ban was eventually cancelled by the parliament on 28 April 2010.

7.4. Dialogue refused.

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on field notes, documents, media publications, event descriptions and semi-structured interviews, collected during the fieldwork stage of my empirical research. As a fellow-journalist and former colleague, I was able to negotiate access to, and perform participant observation in, two newsrooms. At the same time, in my personal capacity as a non-smoker, I joined the core group of active citizens and have been a key member of the campaign against the reversal of the smoking ban in Bulgaria. I have handled this triple identity – of a journalist, a campaigner and a researcher – with care. I have carefully assessed my own level of involvement, in order to minimize the risks of influencing the field that I am aiming to research. At the same time, open access to both the camps of journalists and campaigners has provided me with a precious opportunity to observe and be part of interactions – formal and informal – between journalists and the collective social movement around tobacco smoking. These included joint planning and events coordination, reporting, interviewing and other professional practices, as well as chatting over coffee, dinner and over the Internet. The observation of the boundaries between professional and personal engagement to a collective cause, and the study of the ways in which journalists define them, has emerged as a key theme of my research. I have observed, primarily in the newsroom environment, journalists' professional engagement with editors, fellow journalists, administrators,

human resource and sales executives. Interaction with protesters, politicians, press officers, experts and other stakeholders to the collective issue of tobacco smoking has taken place mainly in public venues, the parliament, streets and squares where civic activities have happened. Finally, personal encounters of journalists with their friends and colleagues have been useful for observing the boundaries of professionalism as perceived and defined by journalists themselves.

In this section I will present the main research results relevant to this chapter. The results concentrate on citizens' attempts to make their voices heard and engage in dialogue with decision-makers and focus on the responses of journalists to the civic campaign against the lifting of the anti-smoking ban. Here, I focus on journalists' own accounts of the professional limitations, norms and practical arrangements that underpin their actions and decisions in relation to the campaign.

Campaigning in favour of a complete smoking ban, the citizen campaign group BezDim simultaneously explored different avenues in order to further participation in political decision-making. As noted above, the Internet and social networks like Facebook provided outlets for their voice. But although the use of Internet in the campaign deserves further scholarly attention, I will now focus on two other methods used to secure the influence of the citizen campaign on government policymaking: formal public participation formats and media coverage. The aim is to analyse journalists' decisions and actions in the light of the broader picture of public dialogue on tobacco control legislation in Bulgaria.

In line with EU law and international policy instruments like the UNECE (1998) Aarhus Convention, Bulgarian legislation includes various formal public participation mechanisms. These mechanisms have encountered ineffectiveness (O'Brien 2009, Taylor 2010) and public participation practices in relation to the lifting of the complete smoking

ban in Bulgaria in 2010 seem to offer yet another proof for this. The documented developments in the case reveal the general reluctance of political decision-makers to engage in effective dialogue with the representatives of the public. This has been apparent even in the few situations in which public participation is prescribed by procedural or legal requirement, such as in the case of hearings on the draft amendments of the Health Act by parliamentary committees.

There have been no documented attempts by authorities to engage in any sort of citizen consultation or other kind of formal public participation exercise in relation to the intended lifting of the smoking ban. While groups who supported the proposed legislative change, for example a restaurant owners' association and certain existing anti-tobacco NGOs, have reportedly participated in the Parliament's Health Committee hearings (Committee 2010), no such opportunity has been available to BezDim members, who lack the authority needed to gain access to such venues. Citizens campaigning in support of the smoking ban have had to rely on formally registered NGOs and journalists to obtain information about the content of the hearings.

The BezDim campaigners placed higher hopes on the mass media in their pursuit of dialogue with political decision-makers. From February until May 2010, when the ban was eventually cancelled by the parliament, the BezDim group purposefully and proactively sought to attract journalists' participation, support and attention.⁷² Over this period the BezDim campaign made use of any participation opportunities offered by mass media and undertook activities that produced substantial news coverage. I shall offer a brief overview of these activities below.

⁷² Field notes H0042 from April 10, 2010.

After the first spontaneous flash mob action in front of the parliament on 19 February 2010, described earlier, the campaign members held their first rally across the capital on 21 March 2010, where creative placards were successfully used to visualise the campaigners' messages on the media pages and screens (Kojuharov 2010). Further, the campaign launched two public happenings: a collective jogging for health and a 'backward march' in front of the parliament, each designed to illustrate a specific key message of the campaign. The former happening was meant to communicate in a positive and appealing way the benefits from the full smoking ban in terms of healthy lifestyle⁷³. Notably, it was designed as a venue for engaging with political decision-makers, and the campaigners sent a public invitation to Prime Minister Borissov, known for his passion for football, to come and run with them. A day later, after neither Borissov nor any other representative of the government appeared at the jogging action, hundreds of campaigners marched backwards in front of the parliament to illustrate their key message that a withdrawal of the smoking ban would be a retreat of the government from EU's shared policy direction in the field of smoking prevention.

Each of the above-mentioned events enjoyed substantial media coverage and attracted journalists' interest and engagement, as well as their occasional opposition. But the doors of state institutions and the ears of political leaders stayed closed for the protesters and their arguments. On a number of documented occasions, political decision-makers, including Prime Minister Borissov, purposefully sought to avoid any direct debate or discussion with the BezDim campaigners. In a media interview he refused the jogging invitation. Later, he personally prevented the participation of citizens supporting the smoking ban in a live television talk show in which he took part.⁷⁴ BezDim campaign members were actually in front of the television building already when an editorial team

⁷³ Field notes H0025 from March 28, 2010.

⁷⁴ Field notes H0053 from April 11, 2010.

member informed them that Borissov had made their absence a condition for his own participation. On his way out from the television studios the campaigners attempted to communicate to the prime minister through a megaphone while his motorcade slowed down and stopped for a few seconds in front of them so that he could observe them through the darkened window of his armoured sports utility vehicle. Apart from raising questions regarding the editorial independence of Bulgarian media, this episode reiterated the resistance of political decision-makers to any form of dialogue with the BezDim campaign.

The denial of dialogue by authorities was partially broken after an emblematic event had taken place: a demonstration within the parliament by a small group of BezDim protesters at the time of the first plenary hearing on the ban's cancellation. Carefully prepared and executed, the action succeeded in postponing the vote until a later date (Novinite.com 2010). Powerful images of citizens holding hands on the Parliament's gallery with non-smoking signs on their chests were picked by most news broadcasts on that day, and thus reinforced their voice. Remarkably, within a day after that demonstration and its widespread coverage by mass media, the Chairwoman of Parliament Tsetska Tsatcheva initiated a direct meeting in her office with representatives of BezDim and the coalition of NGOs to which BezDim were linked. The meeting was an isolated opportunity for the BezDim campaigners to engage in direct dialogue with top level decision-makers, in this case Tsatcheva and the ruling majority's fraction leader Lachesar Ivanov (Tsantsarova 2010).

The above suggests that Bulgaria's 'political machinery', in Felt and Fochler's (2010, p.3) terms, is not well-equipped to accommodate citizens' voices and has, in fact, prevented effective dialogue from happening in the case analysed. My analysis now concentrates on the 'media machinery,' to borrow the term, and how it enabled dialogue, with a focus on

journalists' understandings, decisions and actions in relation to the citizen campaign on the lifting of the anti-smoking ban.

7.5. Journalists among campaigners.

Here I draw on the theorisation in my analytical framework of journalistic professionalism as a discourse that enhances control and self-discipline, generally in favour of the media owners' interests (Aldridge and Evetts 2003). There are normative aspects of professional journalism that stress its social responsibility functions and the 'Fourth Estate' theory. Most of these aspects have been incorporated into the Code of Journalistic Ethics of the Bulgarian Media (NCJE 2004) signed by over ninety mass media organisations. In my analysis, I examine journalists' own judgements as to the level of engagement with the citizen campaign that is appropriate given the norms of journalistic professionalism.

It is important to emphasise that many journalists participating in the research have not necessarily kept the BezDim campaign in mind when discussing their views of professionalism and professional norms with me and each other. I have given priority to empirical material directly related to the BezDim campaign for the purpose of this chapter. However, some data with no direct relevance to smoking has also been used, where appropriate. This includes descriptions of newsroom practices and editorial formats that are applied universally, and journalists' accounts of aspects related to professional and personal engagements with collective – or individual – causes.

One direct form of engagement was the participation of individual journalists in the campaign's planning and activities, documented in the course of my field research. One of the flash mob protesters at the parliament's gates on 19 February 2010 held an editorial

position at a mainstream newsroom⁷⁵ and the editor of an online medical portal joined the BezDim core planning group within the weeks that followed.⁷⁶ News reporters and other editorial staff from various newsrooms offered access to sources, photos and other forms of assistance in the course of the campaign.⁷⁷

I observed these journalists' actions and sought to understand their motives and their judgements of professional norms with regard to their personal involvement with the campaign. In some of these cases the journalists were very careful to keep their support and involvement with the campaign separate from their daily professional duties. At least one research participant's account provided evidence that pressure was exerted on her by the owner of the specialised web journal to limit her involvement in the campaign.⁷⁸ The reported reasons for the pressure included concerns about the potential loss of working time, and what she has described as editorial 'jealousy' caused by her writing and submissions to the campaign's website.

In other cases, the journalists have been quite relaxed and open with their news desks about their involvement with the BezDim initiative. In one instance, mentioned above, a news reporter had tipped the campaigners about a forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Borissov to a live talk show in her television studio.⁷⁹ Notably in this case she had taken the initiative herself and coordinated it with the producers and hosts of the show who apparently found it a professionally sound idea to bring the campaign citizens into the studio. Borissov's firm denial to engage in any dialogue with the campaigning citizens caught all of them by surprise and forced them to change their minds.

⁷⁵ Field notes H0011 from February 22, 2010.

⁷⁶ Field notes H0025 from March 28, 2010.

⁷⁷ Field notes: G0050 from April 15, 2010.

⁷⁸ Field notes H0025 from March 28, 2010.

⁷⁹ Field notes H0053 from April 11, 2010.

Capital, a business weekly newspaper considered among the few ‘quality’ media outlets (Tabakova 2007: 317), with its editorial policy of commitment to journalism standards promoted by Reuters and other western economic media outlets (Roudnikova 2008), took a remarkable line of action. In February 2010 *Capital* launched its own campaign in favour of the smoking ban (*Capital* 2010), while a senior editorial team member was closely involved with the BezDim initiative in his personal capacity. *Capital* and its sister daily newspaper *Dnevnik* reported systematically on all the developments around the cancellation of the smoking ban. They also ran several features, interviews and other articles, offering in-depth analysis of the political and scientific debate around the smoking ban, systematically concluding that the arguments for its weakening and liberalisation were economically unsound. In addition, a ‘Causes’ section was designed within the newspaper’s website, and an editorial team member was assigned to maintain the website and provide it with content. ‘The total smoking ban should remain’ was one of the first of *Capital*’s online causes, which remains active online to date (*Capital* 2010). A letter was printed on behalf of the editorial team and distributed to all MPs prior to the first plenary reading of the proposed cancellation of the smoking ban.

Capital’s institutional stand in favour of the smoking ban was not isolated. Another media outlet, national television broadcaster BTV, a subsidiary of News Corporation (Ibroscheva and Raicheva-Stover 2007) has indicated support for the BezDim campaign. Unlike *Capital*, however, BTV’s interest in institutional involvement has originated from the marketing and management rather than the editorial team and has not been as prominent.

The idea of maintaining impartiality, objectivity and neutrality, as opposed to being biased and taking sides, is among the concepts of primary interest throughout my fieldwork, triggered by debates on their place in the changing normative framework of journalism (Bennett 1996, McQuail 2005). This is why, while observing and documenting journalists’

individual takes on the BezDim campaign, I carefully investigated for any sense of institutional pressure on them to either suppress or support it. The former would have provided solid argument in favour of the hypothesis that the profile of contemporary post-socialist journalism in Bulgaria is moving gradually to serve commercial and corporate ownership purposes, such as potential advertising revenues from the tobacco industry. The former would have triggered a difficult comparison between the merits of journalists' independence and the norms of balance on the one hand, and the need for them to serve society's interests in the light of the 'Fourth Estate' theory.

While many of the journalist participants in my research spoke of pressure from media owners filtering through editorial decision-making onto their individual work, I did not collect any direct evidence of institutional pressure on journalists in relation to their involvement with the BezDim campaign. Similarly, there are no indications that pressure was applied on journalists in the opposite direction to support the campaign. On one witnessed occasion, journalists at an editorial meeting openly discussed the decision of their editors to publish a lengthy article about the motivation of campaigning citizens.⁸⁰ I shall offer a brief extract from my field notes of this case to illustrate the tensions in, and style of, debate:

'The text on smoking is very good. Good style. Lively style', said a woman standing in the back. Several concurring exclamations followed. And then a slim young man spoke up loud: 'Why did we run it?' There was a moment of silence. 'Because something's happening that matters', [deputy editor] Nicola replied. 'When? Is this news?' the slim one persisted. 'Well well, but you are a smoker, aren't you?' someone laughed from the opposite side of the room.

⁸⁰ Field notes G0054 from April 19, 2010.

‘It is not about the debate around the [smoking] ban, it is about these people telling the story of how they got together,’ Nicola said. ‘No, no, it is below our level’, the smoker continued, ‘and it is too personal to be [in the] Society [section].’ ‘It is specific and about real people’, Nicola argued. ‘And it is not heavy’, another voice added approvingly.

Field notes G0054 from April 19, 2010

The described episode demonstrates that journalists rely on their own personal criteria of professionalism in order to justify or question editorial decisions. But it also shows that group dynamics, peer pressure and shared understandings of what is acceptable and what is not for the decisions made in the newsroom are influential in defining the decisions and actions of individual journalists with regard to enabling collective social voices and public participation.

7.6. Smokers among journalists.

Regardless of institutional and group pressures, individual journalists’ opinions on issues of collective social importance represent another important factor to consider when analysing their professional attitudes and actions. As seen in the episode, described above, in the specific case of the BezDim campaign in Bulgaria, these opinions were often influenced by journalists’ personal status as smokers or non-smokers. While no statistics of research participants’ smoking habits is available, I have tried to investigate the potential link between smoking and journalists’ professional judgement in some of the interviews related to the BezDim case.

Like most other active members of the BezDim initiative, the journalists who more directly supported it were either non-smokers or former smokers. Yet, this has never surfaced in the internal discussions as a leading motive for their involvement. The BezDim campaign seems to have appealed to its participants predominantly because of its commitment to responsible governance, the rule of law and a functioning democracy whereby the public's interest is guaranteed.

On the opposite side, there were a few incidents in which smokers within the journalism community have acted purposefully to weaken the BezDim campaign. On one such occasion, a cameraman from a national television channel openly confronted the flash-mob protesters at the Parliament's gates on 19 February 2010. He was part of a group of photo and camera journalists, accredited to the parliament to cover a different event. When asked to invite his colleagues to photograph the flash mob, he refused, citing his status as a smoker as the reason. Further, he explained that he does not believe that smoking is a top priority problem.⁸¹

Probably the most informative incident of a similar kind took place on 21 April 2010, when a group of citizens successfully staged a brief protest action with the parliament. The action was carefully designed to secure a photo opportunity for the press at the time when the proposed legal amendments were being discussed in the plenary meeting.¹³ In order to successfully implement the plan, the BezDim protesters had to obtain individual access to the visitors' gallery and keep a low profile until the start of the plenary discussion when they simultaneously stood up and revealed non-smoking signs to the photographers and the MPs.

⁸¹ Field notes H0001 from February 19, 2010.

This kind of action is not permitted in the parliament's rules of procedure, so it had to be organised and implemented surreptitiously, while at the same time the press had to be notified to expect it. A reporter for a national daily newspaper confronted the activists while they were still waiting in front of the gates of Parliament. When informed discreetly about the forthcoming action, she responded loudly that she was fed up with their 'circus' and that their 'trick should not work this time'. She then went on to warn the security guards at Parliament about the imminent action. In spite of this, the demonstration was successful (Novinite.com 2010), with all the cameras recording it, including the one held by the smoker cameraman mentioned earlier. While fellow campaigners demonstrated in the gallery, a journalist cooperating with the campaign delivered a brief statement to the press outlining the purpose of the protest and the BezDim initiative. In a remarkable move, several journalists then turned on their colleague who had tried to tip the security and accused her of a lack of professionalism.⁸² No such accusations were made by fellow journalists against the campaign-friendly reporter.

The episodes just described, as well as a number of journalists' interviews, reconfirm the importance of peer pressure in establishing a shared understanding of what is professionally acceptable and what is not. Such an observation suggests that the ability of journalists to self-regulate and impose common professional standards on each other may be crucial when they make judgements about whether a citizen campaign on a collective environmental, social or medical issue deserves media coverage.

7.7. Professionalism in the spotlight.

⁸² Field notes H0061 from April 15, 2010.

Journalists who took an active stand in support of, or against, the BezDim campaign were in fact a minority. The majority simply reported on the campaign or otherwise acted upon the topic of the intended cancellation of the smoking ban based on their professional instincts, judgements and editorial routines. One of them, a smoker, commented on her reporting of the ‘backward march’ on 11 April 2010. Followed by a cameraman, she stayed with the demonstrators until the end of the event. Her news report, aired by a satellite news television channel, seemed very detailed and sympathetic to the BezDim cause. However, the journalist denied any sympathy for their cause. On the contrary, she explained, as a smoker she personally opposed the idea of a complete smoking ban in public. The event had been assigned to her as a reporter on duty. In her view, staying longer than rival television news crews helped her obtain more diverse footage. She explained:

The others [did not have] the passing [of the march] near the Russian church where there was a wedding, and the slogans changed from ‘We want to breathe!’ to ‘Bitter! Bitter!’ This is something I included in my report but the others did not have it, did they?

Interview A0096 – 0097 – 0098 from April 13, 2010

The reporter maintained that her report did not carry any bias in favour of or against the aim of the protest – that is, the maintenance of the complete smoking ban. She had simply done her job, which she defined as purely informative, excluding any possibility of judging whether anyone’s cause was right or wrong. Her description seems to draw on a set of professional norms revolving around objectivity, neutrality and bias that have implications for the quality of reporting (Bennett 1996, Boykoff and Boykoff 2004, Boykoff and Boykoff 2007).

A somewhat different view regarding objectivity was offered by a senior editor at a Bulgarian press news desk:

I don't quite believe in independent, objective journalism in which one dispassionately reviews all sides, and does not make any judgements. I believe more in the kind of journalism that fights for causes.

Interview C0107-0108 from May 3, 2010

In spite of what appears as a sharp contrast of opinions, both respondents seemed to agree on one point – that standing up for a cause that one personally supports or believes in is beneficial for quality journalism. Variations of this standpoint have been shared by the majority of journalists who participated in the present research. The formulation above is instrumental in posing relevant questions regarding the selection of 'causes' and the grounds of journalists' 'judgements'.

While most journalist participants in this research seemed to agree on the need to engage with issues that matter for them personally, fewer were at ease with the idea of joining or otherwise supporting collective action. When asked about the types of causes they would engage with, several respondents mentioned charitable and other causes that would benefit certain disadvantaged groups or even individuals. Such causes could be global or very local. They would vary from collecting donations for the victims of the earthquake in Haiti to helping to improve the conditions in orphanages or homes for disadvantaged children across the country.

Apart from intensely covering such causes of interest in their daily reporting or editorial work, journalists spoke of other types of action they were prepared to carry out, or had

already carried out. These included initiating charitable collections – with the endorsement of the media employer; personal visits and contacts with victims' families; and arranging meetings to personally lobby state officials or other decision-makers to take a desired action.

In contrast, journalists seemed much less likely to act in similar ways on socially-important issues involving collective citizen action, other than charity donations or signing petitions. Apart from tobacco smoking and the postponement of the total ban, which could be seen as a Bulgarian issue in the context of EU-wide policy developments, the present research has also sought comparison with global issues of climate change or very local issues of nature protection.

Getting journalists to justify their decision to apply or suspend norms such as objectivity and neutrality has turned out to be almost impossible in a number of examples. Indicatively, minutes after suggesting that objectivity had been her most important norm while reporting from the BezDim protest rally, the same respondent offered a passionate defence of her personal and professional struggle to help an immigrant family obtain citizenship status for their children. Here is how she justified her choices to act beyond the norms of objectivity, neutrality and bias, in direct reference to the 'Fourth Estate' theory:

This is my decision, you know, my personal decision. Most journalists I know do not do this. The norm is that you should release your little report, send the news on air, and move on. Sorry. I do not think this is right. ... To me the utmost expression of professionalism is to chase [decision-makers] until the end, to change the laws. Because this is [my] job, isn't it? The meaning of journalism is to be some sort of a regulator of what is happening, of

the other 'estates'. To search, to investigate, to spot what is not right.

Interview A0096 – 0097 –0098 from April 13, 2010

Such a viewpoint reflects the formulations of the Code of Journalistic Ethics of the Bulgarian Media (NCJE 2004). After listing the groups of norms, which ethical journalists and mass media are expected to abide by, in four sections, the code contains a fifth one, titled 'Public interest'. It grants exemption from all norms listed previously if it can be proven beyond doubt that the public interest has been served. The code then goes on to specify three strictly-limited definitions of public interest, of which one is 'protecting health, safety and security'.

7.8. Conclusions.

The case of the BezDim public campaign against the intended lifting of a full smoking ban in Bulgaria revealed significant reluctance among political decision-makers to acknowledge and engage with citizens' voices. In contrast, the mass media have been comparatively more welcoming to the participation of citizens and the communication of the messages of citizen campaigners. Some in the mass media, such as *Capital* weekly and BTV, have even sought to embrace support for the ban on smoking institutionally but no institutional pressure on journalists to serve the campaign has been documented. Similarly, there is no direct evidence that journalists were institutionally encouraged to promote tobacco industry interests, although many research participants have referred to mounting pressure on contemporary Bulgarian journalists to serve the commercial and other interests of media owners in their work.

Individual journalists did take part in the campaign's planning or otherwise support it in their personal and professional capacities. At the same time, there were several instances in which journalists on duty openly confronted the campaign members and questioned their goals and messages, justifying this in terms of their own smoking habits. Both types of cases demonstrate the importance of journalists' personal motivations and opinions in interpreting the professional limitations that determine whether and the extent to which they are prepared to open up for the voices of citizens' collective campaign. In addition, newsroom dynamics as well as research participant interviews have brought to light the significance of peer-pressure and group decisions in relation to judgements as to what is professionally acceptable and what is not.

The participation of journalists in the collective planning and implementation of BezDim actions has been conceptualised as a practical manifestation of journalists' commitment to the social and democratic responsibility functions of their profession, laid out clearly in the Bulgarian code of media ethics. At the same time, isolated acts of smokers among journalists aiming to undermine the campaign were deemed unprofessional by their peers. According to my analysis, the discourse of professionalism underpinned journalists' actions regarding collective campaigns on environmental and health causes. Drawing on norms within the discourse such as balance, objectivity and neutrality, many journalists who participated in the research agreed upon the need to act professionally in relation to social causes that they personally care about.

A dividing line emerged in the definition of the kinds of causes that journalists felt free to engage with. Many journalists were sceptical, and even openly negative, about the possibility of engaging with collective citizen actions in relation to government smoking policy. This may be a response to external pressure to deliver commercially-viable products or an expression of their own ambition to meet a set of changing professional

criteria. Under all circumstances, their reluctance to engage with collective citizen action suggests that there are similarities between the processes changing contemporary post-socialist journalism practices in Bulgaria and the general trends observed in the West involving the advance of market and economic priorities in the journalistic field, as described by Bourdieu (1998a).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusions

8.1. Reflections on the research process, and the purpose of this chapter.

The question that this thesis has attempted to answer is:

how do professional journalists balance their normative commitments to society and democracy, and the increasing dominance of economic and market priorities over their work, when covering issues of collective interest – such as environmental change?

The purpose of this chapter is only to summarize the findings of this thesis and list the contributions to the answer, but moreover, to offer the author's retrospective critical engagement with the relevant literature engaged, dominated by self-reflection on the part of the candidate of his approach to answering the research question and its strengths and weaknesses.

8.2. *Studying normative commitments in the practice of post-socialist journalism.*

The journey across scholarly debates in different areas of social science has been among the most enriching, but also most challenging contributions of this project. It started from comparative scholarly debates concerning journalism, and the conclusion that the mass media realities of the West, which are dominated by a 'Liberal' Anglo-American system model, inherently controlled by market values and business forces (Hallin and Mancini 2004). Critically approaching a half-century old view that global media systems can be decoded by understanding their underlying political and economic ideologies (Siebert, Peterson et al. 1956) I have sought to establish a link between the underlying political and economic ideology of today's dominant Anglo-American model of journalism and neoliberal discourse. This attempt was based on the definition of 'neoliberalism' as a theory which extends market relationships over other forms of political and economic governance and proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by 'liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade' (Harvey 2005 p. 2).

From the end-journey view point the link seems well established, although not all sources seem to spell it out directly. For instance Örnebring (2009b), whose work offers solid evidence of neoliberalisation of the journalistic field and practices, speaks of influences, related to new economy, rather than neoliberalism. This cautions me about the need for further and more careful conceptualisation of neoliberal influences, and neoliberalism in general, distinguishing between its various aspects and implications. An inquiry into the relations between neoliberal values and professional or occupational ideologies of journalism demands that a researcher should identify in detail whether and how a neoliberal ideology can be detected in everyday journalistic practice. This is where the

interest of this research project in the intersection of journalistic aspects of mass media systems, including the 'cultures', 'traditions' and 'identities' of journalism, as well as the 'values', 'ideals', 'principles', 'norms', and 'rules' that shape its practices as a 'profession', 'occupation' or 'craft,' comes from.

I attempted exploring how professional or occupational ideologies of journalism are influenced by neoliberal values by examining the ways in which journalists legitimate their role in society and render their work meaningful. This suggested lines of inquiry around journalists' own definitions of what is 'professional' for them to do, and what is not, whereby professionalism is a discourse which facilitates the interests of corporate media ownership and imposes a set of market and business values while suppressing normative functions of journalism determined by 'Fourth Estate' theory (Aldridge and Evetts 2003). These functions draw upon journalists' power and responsibility to keep the public informed, thus enabling a democratic overview of ruling elites. They have provided the normative basis for capitalist media ethics and the concept of media freedom, while persistently competing with pressure from media owners to secure journalists' loyalty for their interests (McQuail 2005).

Having established the importance of mechanisms, related to the political economy of mass media (Herman and Chomsky 2008), it is essential to trace their impact in the daily practice of journalism. News production studies, particularly in the US and the UK, enjoy a steady and solid tradition of examining the power relations between journalism and other actors (Epstein 1973, Sigal 1973, Molotch and Lester 1974, Tuchman 1978, Gans 1979, Fishman 1980, Cook 1998, Manning 2001, Gans 2003). Various models of news analysis offer essential knowledge of the nature and range of beats, divisions of the newsroom and organisation of reporting practices (Schudson 1989).

All these are placed in the context of previously discussed political economy and ideological developments by Bourdieu's concept of the journalistic field. Conceptualizing the developments and factors that shape the experiences and practice of journalists, Bourdieu (1984) defines a field as a partially autonomous universe featuring symbolic struggles, and dominated by a group of actors bonded by shared core values, undisputed beliefs and common practices. The social order and the rules that maintain it are unconditionally accepted as self-evident and taken for granted, and in the case of the journalistic field, they shift towards economic dependence and compliance with neoliberal worldviews, Bourdieu warns (Bourdieu 1998a). The field concept makes it possible to plot geographically the power factors, trends and forces that shape - and weaken – the societal functions of journalism. It is the arrival of new norms, practices and professional values in this field that my thesis primarily deals with.

Employing mechanisms of occupational socialisation and identity formation within the professional community, professionalism of journalism is imposed in the field through effective self-discipline and control of journalists' working practice (Fournier 1999 p. 290). Established professional standards are instrumental for submitting journalists to both external "organisational hierarchical supervision, checking and correction" (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p. 556), and internal self-control. These standards include a set of norms, regulating the professional performance of journalism, grouped by Bennett (1996) into three distinct orders of norms: (i) those related to professional practice, (ii) those related to societal and democratic responsibilities, and (iii) business-oriented norms. Third order norms related to the business side of journalists' job and their role as loyal employees appear to be taking priority over professional and societal obligations.

Related developments that support the suggestion that the journalistic field is overtaken by a neoliberal ideology include deregulation of labour markets and the advance of novel occupational and employment practices in journalism, such as temporary and project-based employment; proliferation of flexible employment; outsourcing; technologisation of the workplace; and deskilling of parts of the workforce. Carey's (2000) observations of professional education in the US and the consecutive work of Aldridge and Evetts (2003) suggest that professional education also plays a role in the shaping of culture and practices of journalism that pressures journalists to redefine and renegotiate their professional identity to better accommodate the market, business and political interests of media owners. The trends and features described so far suggest that the professional practice of the dominant model of contemporary Western journalism could be related directly to a dominant neoliberal discourse and its pro-market and pro-business ideology. This discourse extends market relationships over other models of social, political and economic interaction and prioritizes individual, corporate and business interests over collective social needs.

Post-socialist societies offer fertile ground for the advancement of an Anglo-American commercially-driven journalistic culture of a neoliberal character. Having lost or given up many aspects of their indigenous social and political constructions post-socialist societies have turned from disputed territories - or marchlands - between competing ideological modernities into dependent peripheries, swiftly overtaken by the neoliberal project (Dingsdale 2002). Two decades after the end of the Cold War the CEE has been turned into a 'gigantic classroom' (Kuus 2007 p. 153) where neoliberal policies of the West could be implemented with practically no limitation under the guise of a popularly accepted discourse of 'transition' which simplistically presents the developments in the region as a linear development between two set points (Smith and Pickles 1998 p. 2). Challenging the transition discourse reveals post-socialist Europe as suitable ground for studying and

analysing the advance, construction, and implications of the embedding of neoliberal discourse in all fields of life. Having formally joined the EU, post-socialist societies offer a valuable opportunity to examine and analyse normalisation of neoliberalism in journalism and its everyday practices. One aspect of this normalisation can be traced in the way journalists engage with the polemics between the individualistic imperative and issues of collective interest.

Focusing on Hallin and Mancini's (2004) observations regarding the loss of diversity among different media models, and specifically on the implications of a market and commercial imperative on journalism leads naturally to studying Couldry's (2010) interpretation of 'voice' as a connecting term that contradicts neoliberal views. On this basis, it is possible to design a set of indicators to be used for detecting and tracing the domination of neoliberal market and business imperatives over the practice of journalism in post-socialist societies. These include journalists' loss of contact with the social and democratic responsibilities of their profession and the societal and professional norms of journalism presupposed by 'Fourth Estate' theory. Tendencies to domesticate market values in newsroom settings or in the reporting field; refusal to engage with collective social problems and to act upon them; the rise of professional formats that prevent in-depth analyses and investigation; and preference for entertainment, celebrity and reality formats, would all also be indicative of the imposing of a market and business imperative upon journalism. Consecutively, journalists are less able to articulate alternatives to neoliberal views, and are more likely to support the market imperative in their work, everyday lives and society at large.

These indicators of the dichotomy between neoliberalism and 'voice' form the first building block of the theoretical framework for this research. They could be observed and analysed more clearly in a borderline zone in which the neoliberal discourse is confronted

by another discourse that brings a strong leverage against the logic of the pure market. One such discourse is climate change (Grundmann 2007), an issue that is dominated by assumptions about civil obligations to collectively address ecological destruction and loss. Substantial scholarly work has documented various communication, media and journalistic aspects of climate change, demonstrating tensions in the application of different normative orders of professional journalism. Scholarly analysis of the communicative interaction among science, the public and journalists over climate change has suggested a dialogic turn in which communication is conceived not as a one-way flow of knowledge but as a dialogue amongst participants where knowledge is co-produced collaboratively (Smith 2005, Phillips 2011). Journalists' attitudes to different stakeholders whose voices are expected to be articulated in the dialogic process of public engagement are indicative of their ability and willingness to serve as gatekeepers of collective interest. While applied journalistic norms seem to facilitate government communication and business interests (Bennett 1996, Hansen 2010), it is essential to establish the extent to which journalists are able and willing to engage with social movements and campaigns over issues and problems of collective interest such as climate change.

8.3. Research method, participants, field and data.

Anchoring the present research into comparable news production studies (Gans 1979, Fishman 1980) has suggested a set of qualitative research methods was identified for answering the theoretical questions regarding journalists' engagement with collective issues of social importance in the context of the neoliberalisation and marketization of their profession. Based on substantial evidence of social and ethnographic methods' capability of capturing fine grained data, documenting journalistic practice (for a summary see Hansen 1998, Boyer and Hannerz 2006), I have decided to use two primary data collection

methods: participant observation and semi-structured interviews. Based on the need imposed by the research question to collect data about the daily professional routines and practices of journalists, as well as their personal motivations and engagements with issue of public interest and the social movements trying to promote them, I prioritized newsrooms, the reporting field, and the personal sphere of journalists as data collection venues. All these three types of venues offer suitable observation ground for studying journalists' engagement with 'voice' and 'participation.' Professional journalists form the primary body of research respondents in relation to the project, but media and editorial decision makers were included in the project's fieldwork component where possible. Activists and social movements around collective environmental change issues formed an essential component of the empirical research design due to their potential to generate campaigns that make journalists engage with structurally important social and policy choices.

Any country in the post-socialist region could be used as study ground for understanding both the complexities of post-socialist change in society, and the impacts of a neoliberal discourse upon them (Smith and Rochovská 2007). Among the countries in the region where transformation of the economy and the establishing of new administrative mechanisms and democratic institutions have been most painful and time-consuming is Bulgaria (Smith and Pickles 1998). Bulgaria is also a case of slower adaption of market economy and neoliberal models to existing command economy models, and as a country typical for the situation of economic decline and 'disinvestment' in CEE in the years after 1989 (Begg and Pickles 1998 p.118), while during the past decade its economic and monetary policies have been constrained, similar to the small Baltic states, for instance. With its relatively slow ability to reform its administration and build functioning democratic institutions Bulgaria compares to Slovakia and Romania. Bulgaria enjoyed relative economic stability during the post-2008 economic downfall period and is slowly

catching up with EU's GDP per capita levels (Yorgova 2011). At the same time the country experiences steady decline of media freedom and journalistic independence and ranks lowest among EU member states (Basille 2009) – a syndrome to be analyzed further in the light of political economy of mass media in Bulgaria. For all these reasons I have found it suitable for empirical research.

8.4 Fieldwork and data collection.

Field research was designed and prepared in response to the theoretical challenges of this project. Preliminary arrangements for fieldwork included contacts with newsrooms and editorial decision makers, building trust and negotiating access to the two selected newsrooms: of BTV and *Capital* weekly newspaper. Ethical aspects of the work have been carefully considered and a set of measures has been integrated in the implementation of the research, including: anonymising of research participants where possible, securely storing data, ensuring confidentiality and avoiding any risk for research participants.

A broad picture of Bulgaria's post-socialist media landscape was thus rendered, demonstrating an increasing shift in the balance between democratic and social commitments of journalism to the economic and financial priorities born of the dominant neoliberal discourse. The notion of 'transition' as a unilateral process of moving from one pole – that of ideologically-controlled journalism – to another, where liberal journalism and a free media market prevail, has been questioned. Indeed evidence on the development of post-socialist Bulgarian journalism suggested that they have followed an uneven route, determined by the political, economic and social developments of Bulgaria's post-socialist history, whereby neither a free media market nor independent and quality journalism was in place. Quite on the contrary: by the time empirical fieldwork commenced in the autumn of 2009, Bulgaria's media landscape was dominated by non-transparent commercial,

economic and political interests in mass media ownership, a dysfunctional advertising market, and declining freedom of journalism. At the same time the prestige and credibility of journalism as a profession was sinking, as confirmed by the collected field data.

Subjected to regular control by ruling politicians, the state-controlled public media enjoyed a de facto monopoly over national television and radio frequencies and the advertising market was maintained until about the end of the 1990s. Since then, private ownership also failed to deliver the much-desired democratisation and pluralism in the journalistic field. In this context, BTV and *Capital* appear as two leading privately-owned media organisations. BTV was launched in 2000 with an ambitious commercially-driven programming plan, but failed to keep up to its own commitments for politically plural and diverse content. *Capital*, in contrast, has remained loyal to its founders' credo of quality and independent journalism. While BTV's ownership is in the hands of the US-based News Corporation, with the unclear but evident participation of local advertising industry figure Krassimir Guergov, *Capital* was created and run as a newspaper by two businessmen-turned-economic journalists: Ivo Prokopiev and Phillip Harmandjiev. Both outlets took leadership in the market within their segment – national television and quality press.

The setup of both newsroom research placements and my positioning as a participant-observer in the newsroom structures and among fellow journalists was subject to certain limitations in terms of access to editorial processes. Nevertheless, working conditions allowed me to collect ample research data. This was possible in the two newsroom placements, but also in the reporting field. The process of data collection benefited from the author's participation in social groups dealing with issues of collective social interest, such as climate, environmental change and tobacco smoking. The author's past and present involvement with the environmental movement, and with *BezDim* – a civil initiative against tobacco smoking - has also aided data collection for the purposes of this

research. At the same time the mixing of journalistic, activist and research capacity carried potential risks for the quality of research data collected. Avoiding these required careful and persistent consideration of every action taken in the course of field work, and a careful evaluation of any possible influence of the research field by the researcher. As part of it, I ensured that my personality of smoke-free campaigner, as well as my history of environmental activism and journalism, did not have any influence on the journalists who participated in the research. The nature of my role as a researcher, taking up different active roles, has duly been explained to each participant who was interviewed, or whose actions were considered likely to be altered by the lack of this knowledge. As a result there has been no damage on the credibility and quality of collected data.

8.5. Market values and media owners' interests dominating Bulgaria's post-socialist journalistic practice.

Based on an initial survey of the research data, and working with NVivo software, journalists' attitudes to their profession were grouped into seven categories: likes, dislikes, freedom, limitation, power, 'honest journalism,' and no idea or attitude to journalism. Although each of these categories received broad and sometimes opposing interpretations by journalists participating in the research, it is possible to observe that most of them 'liked' their profession. For many respondents the fascination with journalism began in childhood. Among factors like appreciation by colleagues and the public or the reputation of their mass-media employer, journalists were strongly motivated by their job's potential to bring positive change in the lives of others. So journalists in Bulgaria appear to generally like their job, partly because they feel that it enables them to bring about change in society and the lives of others.

However, they also stated that they are not necessarily free to act upon the urge for social improvement or change. Journalists' recollections of their parents' frustrations with journalism during Bulgaria's state socialist past revealed striking parallels with today's state of the profession. Among them was the relation of journalists with political and economic powers of the day, which carried many echoes. Journalists' ability to retain a clean professional conscience is essential for the personal satisfaction of journalists with their jobs. The concept of professional and creative freedom appears to be central in this respect.

Starting from the 'freedom to ask questions' and the opportunity to learn facts that are important for the public, the understanding of 'freedom' is often associated with professional norms. Editorial freedom takes different and sometimes opposing interpretations: while some journalists accept editorial norms but are sensitive to the attempts of media owners and newsroom superiors to limit their creative freedom, others define freedom as the absence of any norms whatsoever. In the absence of professional norms, journalists are easier to manipulate and their professional decisions can become arbitrary and unpredictable.

Professional norms do not offer a panacea either. Grouped in three normative 'orders' by Bennett (1996 p.375), they often contradict and compete with each other in journalists' daily practice. Norms that regulate the practice of journalism, such as objectivity, neutrality or balance, are interpreted differently by different journalists and editors, and seem to conflict with norms, related to journalists' mission to help individual or collective interests and bring in positive change. A third order of business-related norms that refer to journalists' role as loyal employees serving the economic interests of media owners seems to prevail over the other two normative orders, suggesting neoliberalisation of the journalistic field in the terms of Bourdieu (1998a). This business-related order seems to

have taken priority over other journalistic norms. Post-socialist journalists in Bulgaria seem to perceive norms and professional standards as instruments of control – both by superiors, and self-imposed (Aldridge and Evetts 2003 p. 556). Participants defined two avenues of pressure and control on their professional freedom: external, that is, originating outside their newsroom, and internal, that is acting within the editorial team of the respective mass media organisation. Journalists' accounts revealed that the business interests of media owners were often a source of pressure on their work. Media owners directly interfered in editorial processes, using the newsroom hierarchy for this. A general perception -- almost unchallenged – was that it was acceptable for a media owner to use the editorial process of their media organisation and its products for his or her non-editorial purposes.

The research showed that professional norms designed to protect editorial content from the interference of advertisers was subject to pressure even in the most quality-journalism oriented newsrooms in Bulgaria. A willingness to lower the 'wall' between advertising and editorial in one case, and its use to effectively limit the freedom and quality of journalism in another, both reveal increasing tension between professional normative orders. Profit and income generation have gradually gained a prominent position both as editorial themes, and as principles of employment and occupational practice within newsrooms. An illustration of this was the adoption of industrial business terminology in the job titles of 'producers' who form the lowest tier of editorial control in television newsrooms, without in fact holding the authority and credentials of a traditional editor. Other occupational and employment developments that seemed to serve profit making and sacrifice editorial quality included reducing the number of staff, freezing salaries and recruiting young, inexperienced persons and interns for little or no pay.

Some research participants used the term ‘honest journalism’ to define their understanding of professional quality, related to the societal and democracy aspects of journalism. Their choice of words linked professional decisions to personal qualities like honesty and morals, in contrast with pressures and editorial limitations, which were perceived as organisational. ‘Honest journalism’ as a concept signified journalists’ intuitive resistance towards the advance of market and commercial priorities in post-socialist newsrooms and beyond.

The research suggests that these advances of neoliberal practices and norms have served to undermine the societal and democratic functions of Bulgarian journalism. Furthermore, there was no evidence that formal education and professional training in journalism could offer an adequate response to this. University journalism education in Bulgaria was deemed shallow and useless by the majority of participants in the research, and both aspiring and young journalists resorted to learning on the job. There was clear evidence that this trend was serving to undermine journalists’ understanding of the societal and democratic role embedded in other professional norms. Learning-through-practice and peer pressure prevailed in the professional field in Bulgaria, preventing journalists from obtaining a sense of professional norms that might guide their performance and protect it from any kind of corrupt external pressures. A set of Anglo-American professional norms, delivered by the means of professional training abroad and donor-funded projects and workshops in Bulgaria, failed to compensate for this weakness. At the same time, professional training has also been implemented to promote a business-friendly ethos and to justify the domination of market and business values in Bulgaria’s newsrooms.

8.6. *Environmental change as a contested area between normative orders of journalism.*

In the case of the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* documentary, broadcast by BTV in November 2009, the personal interests of the journalist in a national environmental problem combined with rigorous investigation of facts and developments locally and nationally resulted in a fine example of investigative journalism. Also -- perhaps unintentionally – it posed serious critical questions about the impact of neoliberal market and business imperatives on social and common interests. Strictly following her understanding of first order professional norms of journalism, the author explained herself as defending the collective public interest and the film and associated media and political impacts revealed rogue commercial practices and the corruption of democratically elected officials, state and municipal administration and enforcement and planning officers. Thus, the case complied with the second order of societal norms that relate to Fourth Estate theory. The application of rigorous reporting and feature writing and documentary film techniques such as interview quotes from different actors combined with the representation of all sides of the problem under investigation; the strict reporting of facts, figures and their sources; and the use of documentary and archive imagery can result in a quality journalistic product. Without much commentary or direct analysis, such a product can challenge established orthodoxies, such as the domination of market and economic interest over the common good or the schematic representation of post-socialist reality as a linear ‘transition.’ But journalists need persistence and substantial commitment to be able to produce a quality investigation. The author of the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* had to go through a court case to obtain the necessary information from a local municipality. There was evidence in this case of significant resistance against this type of journalism: social actors representing the interests of those who had benefited from the devastation of nature and the violation of planning regulations undertook a unified attempt to prevent the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* documentary from going on air. Apart from providing

macro-economic and patriotic arguments to justify the wrongdoing revealed by the journalistic investigation, the proponents of unlimited business initiative were inclined to apply direct pressure on media decision makers in order to protect their interests. The channels used to deliver such pressure, as revealed by the case, included the political leadership of the country, the administrative and regulatory bodies of the state, and the business and management structures of the mass media organisations. BTV defended its editorial integrity and took a stand defending its journalists in that case, but it was indicative of the sort of pressure that has been applied on journalists whose work questions the established neoliberal discourse in post-socialist societies. In the case of the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach*, corporate communication made it clear that it does not tolerate any critical reassessment of the dominant neoliberal and transition discourses.

In contrast to the *Concrete Gardens – Sunny Beach* case, no in-depth debate over the economic and political paradigms that threaten hazardous climate change was possible over the story of the Copenhagen climate change summit of 2009. The UN summit was the focal point of international policy discussions that were expected to deliver lasting solutions to climate change. But no crucial questions were raised by the journalists covering the summit for BTV and *Capital*. The reasons for such refusal of critical debate identified in Bulgarian newsrooms included a lack of adequate understanding of the gravity of climate change problems by journalists, and purposeful prioritisation of economic and business perspectives to these problems where such understanding existed. In one of the studied newsrooms – that of *Capital* – there was evidence of a consciously pursued editorial line in favour of economic liberalism and against attempted regulatory measures that could limit market freedom. At BTV there was no evidence of such an editorial line, but issues of collective social importance like climate tended to be interpreted only in terms of day-to-day news coverage of events, actions and developments, leaving little

space for analytical or critical perspectives. The latter confirms Bourdieu's (Bourdieu 1998a) argument that television technology is a primary vehicle of neoliberal values.

In both cases a problematic trend has been identified in terms of journalists' attitudes to campaigners or active citizens who undertake public actions to achieve environmental or social change. Journalists tend to prioritize individualistic approaches over collective action, even where they sympathise with its goals. Disengagement from such actions is encouraged under the guise of the journalistic norm of neutrality (Bennett 1996, Boykoff and Boykoff 2004) and discussed in practitioners' perspectives by Ryan (1991), Smith (2000), Painter (2010), and academically by Hansen (2010) among others. Another norm – the separation of editorial from advertising – gets routinely misinterpreted and works reversely, securing priority for sales considerations over editorial accuracy. At the same time the corporate communications of mass media organisations like BTV increasingly frequently employ celebrity culture for the launching and supporting of charitable campaigns of their own liking. In these ways individualistic and corporate profit values served to displace genuine voices that sought to defend collective interests, while journalists were prevented by certain professional norms from adequately covering such voices and giving them prominence. This observation offers a strong argument in support of Couldry's (2010) analysis whereby journalistic practices assist a neoliberal hegemony in its suppression of 'voice.'

8.7. Media battles around tobacco smoking legislation.

The case of the BezDim public campaign against the intended lifting of a full smoking ban in Bulgaria revealed significant reluctance among political decision-makers to acknowledge and engage with the voices of citizens. In contrast, the mass media were comparatively more open to the participation of citizens and the communication of the

messages of citizen campaigners. Some in the mass media, such as *Capital* weekly and BTV, even sought to embrace support for the ban on smoking institutionally but no institutional pressure on journalists to serve the campaign was documented. Similarly, there is no direct evidence that journalists were institutionally encouraged to promote tobacco industry interests, although many research participants spoke of mounting pressure on contemporary Bulgarian journalists to serve the commercial and other interests of media owners in their work.

Individual journalists took part in the campaign's planning or otherwise supported it in their personal and professional capacities. At the same time, there were several instances in which journalists on duty openly confronted the campaign members and questioned their goals and messages, justifying this in terms of their own smoking habits. Both types of cases demonstrate the importance of journalists' personal motivations and opinions in interpreting the professional limitations that determine whether, and the extent to which, they are prepared to serve as platforms for the voices of citizens' collective campaigns. In addition, newsroom dynamics as well as research participant interviews brought to light the importance of peer-pressure and group decisions in relation to judgements as to what is professionally acceptable and what is not.

The participation of journalists in the collective planning and implementation of BezDim actions has been conceptualised as a practical manifestation of journalists' commitment to the social and democratic responsibility functions of their profession, laid out clearly in the Bulgarian code of media ethics. At the same time, some isolated acts by smokers among journalists aiming to undermine the campaign were deemed unprofessional by their peers. According to my analysis, the discourse of professionalism underpinned journalists' actions regarding collective campaigns on environmental and health causes. Drawing on norms within the discourse such as balance, objectivity and neutrality, many journalists

who participated in the research agreed upon the need for them to act professionally in relation to social causes that they personally care about.

A dividing line emerged in the definition of the kinds of causes with which journalists felt free to engage. Many journalists were sceptical, and even openly negative, about the possibility of engaging with collective citizen actions in relation to government smoking policy. This may be a response to external pressure to deliver commercially viable products or an expression of their own ambition to meet a set of changing professional criteria. Under all circumstances, their reluctance to engage with collective citizen action suggests that there are similarities between the processes that have changed contemporary post-socialist journalism practices in Bulgaria and the general trends observed in the West involving the advance of market and economic priorities in the journalistic field, as described by Bourdieu B(1998a).

8.8 Summary of findings and directions for further research.

The summary of findings and conclusions offered above give a full reply to the research question pursued in this thesis. The shorter version, however, is that in the case of Bulgaria, post-socialist professional journalists have prioritized the interests of media owners over their normative commitments to society and democracy. However, this trend is not complete and there are pockets of journalistic work which accord with the core tenets of Fourth Estate theory.

Non-professional journalists, citizen journalists, bloggers and other writers have been left out of the target group of this particular research, but will be kept in mind as potential follow-up ideas emerge. A large-scale task that is still pending is to compare the outcomes of the present research in the field of professional journalism to a similar study in the field

of internet-based social media. The interactions between these two fields in the context of advancing market and business logic remain to be explored in detail.

Another primary direction for further investigation with useful practical implications for the journalistic field concerns the notion that quality journalism can be a profitable business practice and bring income by raising the loyalty and trust of the audience. This hypothesis underlay the business model of *Capital*⁸³, a model that worked successfully up until and including the time of my field research in 2009 – 2010. A top manager at BTV named quality of journalism as “the first and fundamental aim of our business”, the “main pillar” from which viewers’ interest extends to other entertainment genres, which actually make profit⁸⁴. Prompted to elaborate on the connection between quality journalism and the profit-making business goals of BTV, the station’s manager highlighted the importance of maintaining viewers’ trust to earn their loyalty, and therefore being able to sustain high audience numbers:

There is one thing in our business that builds loyalty and creates sustainability: it is precisely journalism and news making. That is where the whole enterprise should be of very high quality, because the viewer can very easily recognise when (s)he is being lied to, misled, when some information has been withheld, or is manipulative.

Interview A0128 from November 10, 2010

This quote offers a suitable closing point for this thesis for an additional reason. The station’s chief executive offered a clear explanation for the sudden drop in confidence in

⁸³ Interview A0099 from April 16, 2010.

⁸⁴ Interview A0128 from November 10, 2010.

the quality of BTV's news among the participants in environmental protest rallies in Sofia during June 2012 that were described at the very beginning of the thesis. In the era of Facebook and unlimited Internet communications, any attempt by the mass media to conceal or suppress information from its audience can hardly remain unnoticed. This last observation allows me to finish this discussion on a positive note. It indicates that new democratic mass communication technologies are available to support the emancipation of journalism from the overwhelming pressure of neoliberal economic and market imperatives, and from the direct control and intervention of corporate forces and owners' influence upon journalistic practices. It is a live question as to what forms the alternative business models and media formats might take that can revive the role of journalists in enabling 'voice' and 'dialogue' in favour of collective public interests, whether at the level of very localized public health concerns or on the global environmental scale.

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